BING

SUMMER 2020
No. 185

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club – as recognised by the **Guinness Book of World Records**

Our Mission:

To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

Membership

Membership renewals fall due on 1st January each year and subscription rates effective for 2020 are:

USA and Canada	**US $35 or C$45 per annum**
UK	**£20 per annum**
Mainland Europe, including Eire	**£23 per annum**
Australia and New Zealand	**A$50 per annum**
Rest of the World	**£24 per annum**

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(a) American members who should pay Perry Huntoon in US dollars

(b) Canadian members who should pay Scott Payne in US or Canadian dollars

(c) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Websites

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BING Magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326
Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Club_Crosby

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or to the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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Editorial

Well, it's been a strange, challenging and worrying time since our last issue, due to Covid-19. I do hope that you have all come through safely and one advantage of our extended stay in our homes was that we had plenty of time to listen to Bing and watch his movies. It was wonderful escapism from the day-to-day pressures. A Crosby song can always lift me out my "sloughs of despond" as Bing once described it.

There has also been the opportunity to read more too and I've enjoyed re-reading Gary Giddins' superb "Swinging on a Star" and at last I got round to working through the massive "As Thousands Cheer – The Life of Irving Berlin" by Laurence Bergreen. I've read a number of other show business biographies too and the more of these I read, the more I realise how balanced and reasonable an individual Bing was compared to some of the others. Perhaps it was his many interests outside the entertainment world that contributed to this.

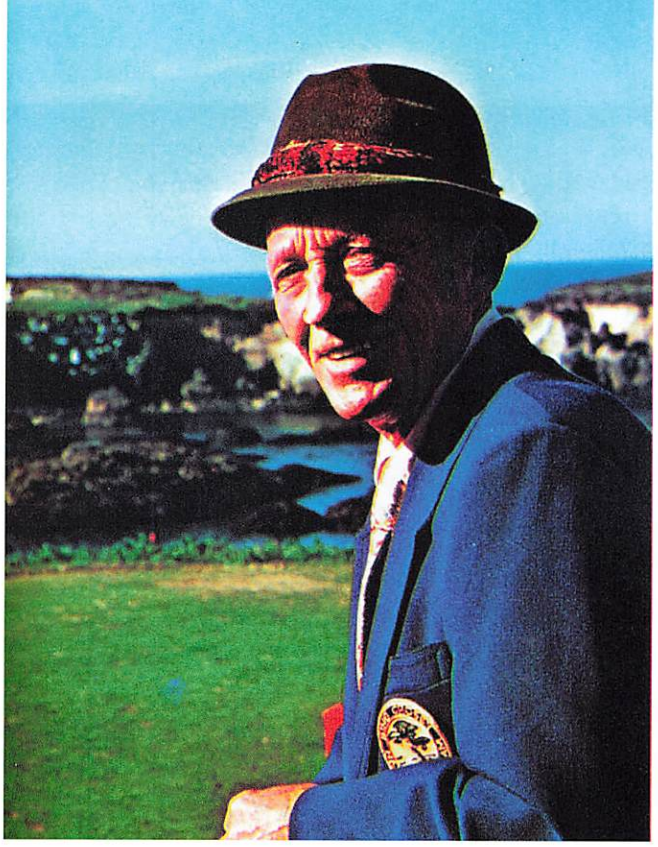
A contributor to Crosby Fan World alerted me to "DeOldify", a software program which enables one to colorize black and white photographs. The cover of this magazine is an example and it shows Bing being made a member of the Western Shoshone-Paiute tribe on the Owyhee reservation, near Elko on July 25, 1950. You may spot a few more photos in this issue which have been converted to colour. How do you feel about this? Should I stick to the originals?

It was a great relief to me when our printer went back to work as I was becoming concerned that this edition of the magazine would have to be delayed. This time we have the customary wide selection of articles about Mr. Crosby with our usual regulars in place plus contributions from Ron McBride, Mark Scrimger, Frans van der Kolff and John Bassett. There is even news of a hitherto unknown Bing film appearance. Hopefully, there's something for everyone. Happy reading!

Now over to Anton.

Malcolm Macfarlane *macwilmslo@aol.com*

As my fellow British Co-Editor states above, these are difficult, uncertain times. Here in West Tennessee, we have been mostly at home since mid-March: classes at the university where I teach were suddenly turned from in-person to online sessions, my 7-year-old daughter has also been at home with limited online contact with her classmates and teachers, and everyday life has become, in general, even more sedentary than usual for our family. Throughout these times, whose end we can't quite see near for now, Bing's voice has been as much a soothing presence to me as it must have been to millions of people all through the Great Depression in the 1930s or World War II in the '40s. For no matter how much time passes and how different the decades and eras may seem, way down deep, people of all historical periods have similar



feelings and anxieties that may be alleviated through music and art. And Bing has helped me in the past months as much as I am sure he's helped so many of our members.

Because of the pandemic, it is true, I have had the chance to dust off many records that I hadn't played in a while and many books that had been on my reading list for entirely too long. The wonderful Jonzo series, some of whose volumes have remained in their shrink wrap for years since their time of purchase, have provided hour upon hour of enjoyment as I rediscovered many tracks from Bing's deep catalog that I hadn't heard in ages. Moreover, this has been the right moment to go back and reread several Bing-related books that I hadn't picked up in years, from *Call Me Lucky* to the first volume of Giddins' biography to Norman Wolfe's always worthwhile *Troubadour*. But most of all, I got to dig into the new 2-CD set from Sepia that concentrates on Bing's late-'40s recordings from his excellent *Philco Radio Time* series. Highly recommended, this is a set that will offer members endless listening pleasure and quite a few surprises, as it allows us to hear Der Bingle's take on tunes that he wasn't able to record commercially due to one of those AFM bans that so plagued the music industry in the '40s.

As always, I would like to thank all contributors to yet another issue of BING for their wonderful efforts, without which there would be no magazine, and in closing, I want to wish all members the best possible summer. Please stay safe and healthy no matter where you are. I know that it seems like it's been a long, long time already, but as the recently deceased Dame Vera Lynn used to sing, "we'll meet again" with our friends and loved ones before too long.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez *antongarciafdez@gmail.com*

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Secretary / Treasurer's Report

As I compile my report on the 5th of June the COVID 19 threat remains ever present and I sincerely hope that members have escaped the virus and found ingenious ways to get through and enjoy their enforced isolation. There are many positives that have resulted from the lockdown and perhaps the two most beneficial are a quieter and cleaner environment. On the negative side, not being able to meet with family and friends has taken its toll. I hope by the time you read this the restrictions will have eased and your lives will have returned to some kind of normality.

Members will be pleased to note that we welcome seven new subscribers to the club this summer and this is most encouraging given that we lose around 30 members each year. The loss is perfectly understandable given our age profile and the era we celebrate but in my opinion the ICC can be proud of sustaining the club, 43 years after Bing's passing and 84 years since the club was founded. Long may this continue!

Our worldwide membership of 432 breaks down as follows and we are pleased that there continues to be generous support for our mission - *To perpetuate the memory and musical legacy of BING CROSBY for the benefit of future generations.*

UNITED STATES	**252**	UNITED KINGDOM	**132**
CANADA	**16**	IRELAND	**6**
AUSTRALIA	**12**	GERMANY	**3**
NETHERLANDS	**3**	BRAZIL	**2**
AUSTRIA	**1**	BELGIUM	**1**
DENMARK	**1**	MONACO	**1**
SPAIN	**1**	SWEDEN	**1**

The Philco Radio Time CD set has been very well supported by members and as of June 1st, Perry, Scott, David and yours truly have posted out 135 copies to members, representing approximately 30% of the membership. Although this is a good result it does beg the question as to why the remaining two-thirds of members did not order a copy? Perhaps members would care to let us know what their preferences are, what material they would still like issued on CD, and if they are still collecting and appreciating CDs.

We really are fortunate to have such keen and loyal members.

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a sincere wish that you will derive much interest and enjoyment from your membership of the club. You are amongst friends.

CANADA
Carol Cade (Brantford, Ontario)

UNITED KINGDOM
John Turner (Coton Hill, Shrewsbury)
Fred J Wadsworth (Basildon, Essex)
Annalise Cowlishaw (Quorn, Leicestershire)

UNITED STATES
Alexander Aaron (Woodland Hills, California)
John Fricke (New York, New York)
Dixie Crosby Goodwin (Granada Hills, California)
(Editor: Dixie is Phillip Crosby's daughter and I had the great pleasure of meeting her some years ago at Charles Baillie's home with her Dad.)

Donations

The following members have been very generous with their gifts and we are truly grateful for their support.

UNITED KINGDOM
Nicholas Morrison, Ken Shaw, Frank Startup, John R. Byrd, Miss Jill Enno, Michael R. Reynolds, Peter Hawkins, Geoff White, Michael Portley, Mark Spry, Bob Halls, Jeremy Rose.

GERMANY
Lars Schinnerling

Deaths

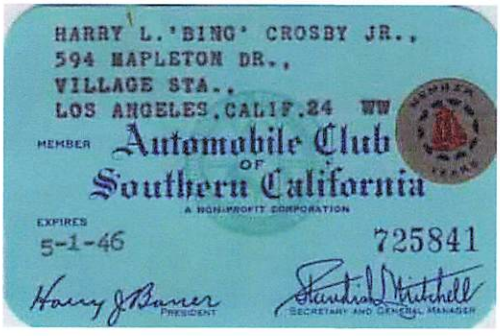
We are very sorry to record the loss of:

Tom Maher (Worcester) and **Gale Harvey** (Tongham, Surrey).

Beryl, Tom's widow, reported his passing and let us know just how much he had enjoyed his membership of the ICC over the years. She told us that Tom was no mean musician in his own right. Tom and Beryl were enthusiastic supporters of the Leeds meeting.

Gale Harvey was the daughter of the late Gwen Harvey and she played a major role in helping us to pass on Gwen's collection to members resulting in a very generous donation to the club's funds.

To Beryl and Gale's family and friends we extend our very sincere condolences.



Bing Crosby on CD

This is my usual reminder that the following single CDs remain available from me.

Costs as follows:

UK	**£7.50**
Europe	**£9.50**
Rest of the world	**£10.50**

The price for the double CD is:

UK	**£9.50**
Ireland & Europe	**£11.50**
Rest of the world	**£15**

Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Perry Huntoon and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

- **BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vol 10**
- **BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors**
- **BING CROSBY Entertains for Woodbury Soap**
- **BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.**
- **BING CROSBY – HOLIDAY IN EUROPE (and beyond)**
- **JOIN BING & SING ALONG (2 CD SET)**
- **PHILCO RADIO TIME – Starring BING CROSBY (2 CD SET)**

Michael Crampton *mdcrampton@gmail.com*

Arne Fogel in Lockdown

Apart from his weekly radio show, Arne has managed to keep performing during the lockdown and on June 7 he and Rick Carlson saluted Bing at the Crooners Supper Club in Fridley, Minnesota.

The Crooners Supper Club was determined to bring live music back and it launched a series of parking-lot concerts starting June 1. Similar to a drive-in movie, concertgoers stayed in their vehicles to witness musicians on a tall portable outdoor stage. A limited food menu was available, with servers bringing items to each vehicle. Indoor restrooms with attendants were open to one person at a time.

"This is our first initiative in a plan that has several stages," Crooners owner Mary Tjosvold said in a statement announcing the scheme. "We want to give audiences a safe option during this period of transition, as we approach the difficult yet essential process of getting ourselves outside and small businesses like restaurants working again."

Crooners' parking lot accommodates about 80 vehicles for concerts; taller trucks and vans were asked to park farther away from the stage. The shows took place come rain or shine.

What a great initiative and well done Arne for getting involved!

Rockwell Paints Bing

Welcome Addition to Crosby Collection at Gonzaga

Gonzaga's Crosby collection recently added an original Norman Rockwell painting of Bing, which was commissioned by the California Peach Association for magazine ads featuring the crooner. Trailside Galleries in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, had held the painting for the past 25 years, and deeded it to Gonzaga after learning of the University's extensive collection of Crosby memorabilia. It is being hung in the Bing Crosby House.

Bing's portrait is taken from a promotional photograph of the character he played in his 1949 movie *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, based on the novel of the same name by Mark Twain. Although Norman Rockwell was best known for his 323 Saturday Evening Post covers, his work was in demand by companies, such as Jell-O and Mass Mutual, all wanting to use his images of everyday and popular Americans, including Bing.

Bing in Los Altos, California

Lost photo unearthed after six decades

Bing popped up in the *Los Altos Town Crier* on May 13. Robin Chapman tells us more.

Back in February, I reported on the forgotten connection between actor-crooner Bing Crosby and the Los Altos Youth Center. In addition to his spectacular, multimedia career, Bing, who died in 1977, was a quiet philanthropist who donated more than $1 million to youth centers all over California. In 1959, he wrote a check for $10,000 to help start construction of the Los Altos Youth Center, now known as LAYC.

The center opened a year later, and Los Altos scheduled its dedication for Sunday, Jan. 15, 1961.

Bing planned to be in Pebble Beach that month for his golf tournament – now the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am – set for Jan. 19-22. His brother, publicist Larry Crosby, said Bing would attend the dedication, and Los Altos was abuzz with excitement. Students at Los Altos High created a "Welcome Bing" sign, and the city commissioned a commemorative plaque for the star, designed by resident Warren Ferris, a calligrapher and consultant to the Library of Congress.

But Bing did not appear that day. A small item in the Los Altos News showed unsmiling local leaders with the caption: "Mayors Show Crosby Plaque. Bing Not There to Receive It."

After my story ran, I got a call from Los Altos native Jim Shattock, born in 1954, who had recently returned to live in his family home. In the summer of 1976, he had a job with the Los Altos Recreation Department, prior to starting his career as a firefighter. Looking for something in a tool closet at Hillview Community Center, he found a battered picture of Bing Crosby holding a plaque. It was on the floor, and the glass

Courtesy of Jim Shattock - Bing poses, circa 1961, with a plaque created for him by the city of Los Altos. The photo, signed by Bing, suffered damage – to his nose and his hand – from being left on the floor of a tool closet at Hillview Community Center.

covering it was shattered. Jim recognized the plaque in the picture as the work of his great uncle, Warren Ferris, who lived on Rosita Avenue. He asked if he could take it home to show his mom, and supervisor Bob Workman said: "That old thing? Sure." Jim took it home, showed his folks, and promptly forgot about it for 44 years.

Then he read my story. He was sure the Bing photo was still in the family home on Arboleda Drive, where his father, Art Shattock, had resided until his death three years ago at the age of 102.

"My mom and dad never threw anything away," Jim sighed.

He found the nearly 60-year-old photograph in a pile of old clippings. It shows a tired-looking star, still in golfing togs, posing alone. Stamped on the back is "Photo by Bill Early." Bing did receive his plaque at some point and acknowledge it. He inscribed the photo: "To my friends in Los Altos. Gratefully, Bing Crosby."

We still don't know why he missed the event; so there is more to learn. But we now know he did his best to make amends.

Jim would like to return this piece of history to the people of Los Altos. We owe him our gratitude for unearthing it.

We also owe his parents, for never throwing anything away.

Robin Chapman is a journalist, historian and Los Altos native.

(Editor: Appears as though Larry Crosby suggested that Bing would be there without clearing it with him first. First Bing gives $10,000 and then it sounds like he was pilloried in the press for not going to receive a plaque! Think they were missing the point.)

Going My Way in Warrington, UK

Jason Liddiard had to cancel his spring and summer meetings because of the dreaded virus, and because many of us are over 70 and vulnerable, he is rather pessimistic about any further meetings taking place this year. Let's hope things improve so that we can at least get-together for a Christmas celebration.

A Rainy Day in New York

This new Woody Allen film tells the story of a young couple who arrive in New York for a weekend where they are met with bad weather and a series of adventures. As the film opens, Bing is heard singing "I Got Lucky in the Rain" which I assume was taken from one of his Philco shows. Good to hear Bing's voice being featured in this way.

Dixie Lee Crosby

Anton Garcia-Fernandez talks to Chris Hammond about the Historical Marker in honor of Dixie Lee Crosby in Harriman, Tennessee.

As we mentioned in our winter 2019 issue, the city of Harriman, Tennessee, the hometown of Dixie Lee Crosby, Bing's first wife, honored her most famous native with a historical marker late last year. It is a fitting tribute to a talented woman who was already involved in a fairly successful career as an actress and singer by the time she met and married Bing Crosby but who has been sadly underrated and forgotten as of late, even in her hometown.

The catalyst for this revival of interest in the life and career of Dixie Lee Crosby is Chris Hammond, an East Tennessee teacher and local history enthusiast who, along with Dixie's granddaughter, went to great lengths to have the historical marker approved by the Tennessee Historical Commission. I had a chance to talk to Mr. Hammond (who, by the way, is now a new member of the ICC) for one of my podcasts a few months ago, and we discussed all things Dixie Lee: her actual birth year of 1909, her musical influences, how she got started in music and movies, her meeting and marrying Bing, and some of her family history, among many other subjects. And of course, we talked about the historical marker, so here is the transcription of some of the information Mr. Hammond provided about it, which I thought might be of interest to members. If you would like to listen to the entire 94-minute conversation, you may find it on YouTube by typing "Say don't you remember Dixie Lee" into the search box.

Anton G.-F.: **When and why did you become interested in the figure of Dixie Lee Crosby?**

Chris Hammond: Ever since I was a kid, I've always had an interest in Golden Age Hollywood. I grew up watching all those westerns and film noirs. I am also a huge fan of local East Tennessee history, and that's where I first came across Dixie Lee. I'd heard her name before, but I didn't know a whole lot about her. That's when I started researching more and more about her. She was an East Tennessee native, and she has largely been forgotten, not just here locally, but in general she has fallen through the cracks a little bit. I've spent a lot of my free time just reading articles and looking at genealogical stuff about her. And when I started discovering film clips and audio and pictures of her, I was hooked!

Dixie appearing on Al Jolson's radio show in 1935 with Victor Young leading the orchestra

A.G.F.: Dixie Lee was from the small town of Harriman, Tennessee. Could you talk a little bit about the town?

Chris Hammond: Harriman is in eastern Tennessee, between the Tennessee Valley region and the Cumberland Plateau region. It's a small historic city, incorporated in 1891, and it was named for Walter Harriman, who was a Civil War officer who had camped near the Emory River there. Its nickname is "The town that temperance built": when it was created, it was envisioned as a town free of alcohol and debauchery, a sort of moral compass, a city that is free of bad things. It's not too far from Knoxville, about a 35-minute drive from there.

A.G.F.: Harriman, Tennessee, is now honoring Dixie Lee with a historical marker. How did this come about?

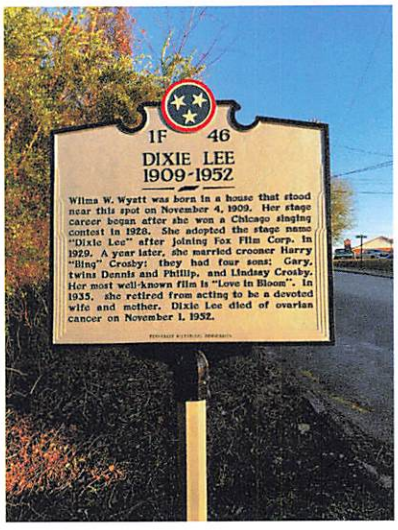
Chris Hammond: It all started when I began researching Dixie Lee. It started for me as a hobby: I began reading about her, whatever little was out there, and learning about her career. I started collecting artifacts (movie stills, photos, etc.) and I compiled a nice little small collection. One of the coolest things I have is the engraved highchair (the tray part) that was Gary [Crosby's]. Bing and Dixie had had it made for Gary when he was a baby, and I purchased it from someone in California whose wife's grandmother or great-grandmother worked as one of the maids for the Crosbys. All this led me to wonder why Dixie Lee had been forgotten and what I could do about it. So that led me to contact the city of Harriman and pitch the idea that Dixie Lee could be for Harriman what Dolly Parton is for Sevierville.

A.G.F.: Back in 2014 there had been efforts to honor the memory of Dixie Lee, and you built on that foundation, taking the project a great deal further…

Chris Hammond: The whole purpose of this is to honor and recognize Dixie Lee for what she was as a person and her talent as an actress and singer and her career. In reaching out to the city I was able to get in touch with some of Dixie's family, and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dixie Lee Crosby, her granddaughter, who has just as much involvement in this historical marker as I did and is a lovely woman.

A.G.F.: Was getting the marker approved a long and difficult process?

Chris Hammond: It all happened through the Tennessee Historical Commission. They have a historical marker program, and it honors significant people, places, events, etc. that contribute to the greater, broad pattern of Tennessee history. Not anyone can get one of these markers; you have to apply for it, and then the THC meets three times a year and votes on new proposals. The committee is made up of historians and specialists, so you have to back up the proposal with facts and submit documentation with the evidence.


1F 46
DIXIE LEE
1909-1952
Wilma W. Wyatt was born in a house that stood near this spot on November 4, 1909. Her stage career began after she won a Chicago singing contest in 1928. She adopted the stage name "Dixie Lee" after joining Fox Film Corp. In 1929. A year later, she married crooner Harry "Bing" Crosby; they had four sons: Gary, twins Dennis and Phillip, and Lindsey Crosby. Her most well-known film is "Love in Bloom". In 1935, she retired from acting to be a devoted wife and mother. Dixie Lee died of ovarian cancer on November 1, 1952.

The marker is now in place near Dixie's birthplace in the Walnut Hill section of downtown Harriman

A.G.F.: Where will the marker be located? Near the house where she was born perhaps?

Chris Hammond: We had a general idea of where the house that Dixie was born in stood, but it is no longer there because it burned down in 1959, in a house fire. It was a shotgun style wood-framed house, one story, in the Walnut Hill neighborhood in downtown Harriman, one of the older parts of the town.

***

On behalf of all the members of the ICC, we would like to thank Chris Hammond for his concerted efforts to honor the memory of Dixie Lee Crosby, and we encourage all Crosby fans who may be traveling through East Tennessee to make it a point to visit beautiful downtown Harriman and take a look at this wonderful historical marker.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez

(Editor: Members may like to know that Chris Hammond is writing a detailed article about Dixie Lee for our next issue.)

Golfing and Horsing Around in Aiken, South Carolina

Ron McBride has been doing some great research into Bing's visits to Aiken, South Carolina.

Located in the "Old South" of the United States with a population of around 30,000 people, perhaps not many people have heard of Aiken, South Carolina. Bing Crosby fans, however, may be somewhat familiar with the small city. "Southern Living" Magazine has named this city of 30,000 people "The Best Small Town in the South." Despite its' small size, many of the rich and famous have gone in and out of its' city limits. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor were frequent visitors in Aiken, beginning just months after his abdication. Presidents Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and Dwight D. Eisenhower, entertainers Fred Astaire, Country entertainer Minnie Pearl, Joanne Woodward, Paul Newman and Andy Williams, socialite families The Vanderbilts, The Astors, and many others have graced (and sometimes scandalized) its' locales, stages, golf courses and horse racetracks.

Golf great "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias played at the Aiken Golf Club. Tommy Hitchcock, who has been included in the list of the greatest polo players in the sport, wintered in Aiken. And it was Tommy Hitchcock's life that formed the basis for F. Scott Fitzgerald's book "The Great Gatsby." Fred Astaire was known to dance up and down the steps of the post office while getting his mail, much to the delight of the locals. Astaire and his first wife Phyllis spent parts of 21 winters in Aiken. The owner of the Hope Diamond, Evalyn Walsh McLean, wintered in Aiken. She was known to place the diamond on her dog's collar at her parties and would even wear it when gardening. When not wearing it, she would hide it in her silk lingerie.

And anyone familiar with Country entertainer Minnie Pearl knows one of her trademarks was the price tag hanging from her hat. It was in Aiken, South Carolina where this tradition began. When in Aiken for a performance, Minnie realized she had forgotten to bring a hat so she went to a local shop and bought one. During her performance that evening, the price tag slipped down out of the hat. Given the audience reaction, Minnie incorporated it into her act!

And among the list of famous people that spent time in Aiken, South Carolina, was Bing Crosby. Bing visited Aiken several times throughout the years, playing at the Palmetto Golf Club (5th oldest in the USA) and hanging out at the 1-mile length Aiken horse training track where some of his horses were trained. Bing would sometimes combine a visit to Aiken with a trip to nearby Augusta, Georgia to watch the Masters golf tournament.

Aside from his movies being shown in town, Bing's connection to Aiken goes back at least as far as 1939 when Lindsay C. Howard brought some horses from the Howard/Bing Crosby stables on November 14 of that year to train in Aiken. Among the horses was "Ligaroti" which had won $39,000 for its owners in the prior racing season. The Chamber of Commerce reported it was considering asking Bing to bring his cows too, claiming to "have the world beat at raising cows!" The horses went back west late December. Twelve horses from the Howard/Crosby stable were also wintered in Aiken in 1941. Interestingly, Howard was the son of the owner of the very famous racehorse "Seabiscuit".

According to a December 9, 1942 issue of the Aiken "Standard and Review" newspaper, Bing was expected in town in a couple days to visit Mr. & Mrs. William Post. Post was a stable owner and trained Howard/Crosby horses in 1943 and 1944. Bing also spent several days in Aiken sometime in March, 1946 with Oleg Dubassoff, there to check on the training progress of his horses at the Aiken Training Track.

Bing with Bobby Knowles

Bing was more often seen in Aiken to play golf however, starting in the early 1950's. Bing sometimes played with amateur golfer Bobby Knowles. Knowles was the great grandson of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. About Bing, Knowles commented "Crosby could "break 80" if his mind was not on show business, but if working on a project, his scores would suffer." Bing was scheduled to play in the March 21, 1951 one-day Pro Am tournament at Palmetto Golf Club, as was industrialist Henry Ford III. Club officials were looking forward to hosting both; however, both ended up canceling out of the event. Ford cancelled, claiming he was detained due to business reasons. Bing canceled "due to throat problems"; however, he had a recording session the next day so his throat must not have been too bad.

On November 14, 1956 it was announced Bing and friend Phil Harris would be landing the next day at Bush Field in Augusta, Georgia. Not giving any reason for the visit, it was assumed they planned to play golf at the Augusta National Club and then go on to Aiken to

play a few rounds. The Augusta "Chronicle" newspaper and WRDW radio announced they would be on hand to interview the celebrities. When Crosby and Harris landed on the 15th, several hundred locals met them at the airport. Bing, appearing to be rather amused by the attention, asked "Who're you looking for? Elvis?" to some teenagers holding out autograph books. It doesn't appear Bing and Harris went on to Aiken, instead leaving Augusta for Florida after five days.

In the first week of April, 1957, Bing played in the fourth annual Devereux Milburn Memorial Trophy, which was an annual invitational four-ball tournament held at the Palmetto Golf Club in Aiken. The Palmetto Golf Club is a very attractive course, lined with pine trees and azaleas, 6,726 yards in length. The purpose of the invitational was "to get a congenial bunch together for two days of golf. They don't have to be good golfers, but they have to like to play, and we want them to be fun off the course as well as on." Prizes for the tournament were silver cigarette cases, leather attaché cases and portable transistor radios. The first couple hours of day one were played in a drenching rain from a late winter storm. The players' only protection from the elements were gaudily striped umbrellas. Fortunately, the second round was played in sunny weather. Bing and his partner, Vincent Draddy, came in fourth.

In March, 1958, Bing had signed a lease for a month's stay at the "old Andrew home" on Dibble Road in Aiken. He had planned on playing at the Palmetto Golf Club and also to watch the Master's Tournament in Augusta, Georgia. However, citing business commitments, he canceled the lease. In 1959, Bing was invited to participate in the sixth annual Devereux Milburn Memorial Trophy but citing other commitments, he declined.

Bing was back in Aiken in 1960 for the seventh annual Devereux Milburn Memorial Trophy. He and Kathryn had flown into Augusta on April 3, where they were met by Bing's bodyguard (Leo Lynn) who had driven Bing's car there for the couple's use while in Aiken and Augusta, Georgia for the Masters tournament. Bing and Kathryn stayed in a private cottage. Bob Crosby and wife June joined the Bing Crosby's on April 6, staying at the Wilcox Hotel. In the first round of the Trophy, Bing tee'd off on hole #1 and his ball landed 50 yards short of his normal distance. Bing turned and smiled at the spectators and said "the thing is to keep it in play in tournament golf!"

Both Crosby couples viewed the Masters tournament in Augusta. On Palm Sunday (April 10), Bing and his party went to St. Mary's Help of Christian's Catholic Church for the 9 A.M. mass. They found the church so crowded, they decided to go up to the choir loft to sit. Sister Patricia Eileen, not recognizing Bing, told them they had to leave as the choir for the 9 A.M. service consisted only of young people. Amused by the incident, Bing later told a friend it was only the second time he had been refused a place in the choir. He said the first time was when he was a child and showed up to choir practice in a baseball uniform. After the service, Bing's party met Father George Lewis Smith in his study for coffee.

A few days after the Crosby's had left town, the local newspaper (The Aiken Standard) ran an article about Bing being ejected from the choir and a young member of the choir sent a copy of the article to Bing. Bing actually received the article, read it and sent an autographed picture to "Deborah" (Pawley) with the inscription "To Deborah, Please get me in the choir! Bing Crosby". The photo is now a part of the collection of the Aiken Museum.

Deborah's photo from Bing

With the Screen Actors Guild strike having ended April 7, Bing and Kathryn cut their vacation short (they had planned on leaving April 17), leaving for California on April 11 via Atlanta and Houston so Bing could finish *High Time*. Bob Crosby and his wife also left on the 11th.

Although there are no other recorded appearances of Bing in Aiken, South Carolina I could find, Bing no doubt enjoyed the time he spent in Aiken. It appears the citizens of Aiken felt the same way about Bing as he is still remembered fondly in Aiken.

Sources:

- "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" by Malcolm Macfarlane
- VisitAikensc.com – "Iconic Places in Aiken That Were Touched By fame"
- Aiken, SC "Standard and Review" newspaper (multiple articles)

- Augusta, GA "Chronicle" newspaper - December 20, 2019 article by music columnist Don Rhodes
- Aikentrainingtrack.com
- April 22, 1957 issue of "Vault" magazine, article by Alfred Wright
- "Augusta and Aiken in Golf's Golden Age" by Stan Byrdy and Augusta mayor Bob Young
- "Images of America: Aiken" by Janice McDonald and Paul Miles
- "Palmetto Golf Club – The First 100 Years" by George Brelsford, Dale Haas & Bobby Knowles

Ron McBride

Bing in lyrics

In the past, we have listed song lyrics which mention Bing (see issues #155, p41; #158, p26; #181, p9), and we came across another couple recently. First it's Sammy Davis Jr's version of "Will You Still Be Mine?" when he sings "when Merry Christmas has no Bing, will you still be mine".

The second instance is the recording made by Dinah Shore and Buddy Clark of "You're the Top" in 1947. This was never released but David Lobsoco uploaded it to "A Trip Down Memory Lane" on YouTube for us all to hear Buddy Clark sing "you're Crosby's salary".

There can't be any other singers who are mentioned so often in song lyrics.

"Uncle John"

Lorne Harasen considers a very important man in Bing's career – John Scott Trotter.

Bing Crosby worked with many orchestras but the compositions, arrangements and orchestra leading of John Scott Trotter resulted in a 17-year association and a personal friendship that went longer than that. It's useful to note that Bing worked with Paul Whiteman at first but he also recorded and broadcast with Jimmy Dorsey, Les Brown, Axel Stordahl, Count Basie, and Victor Young among many others.

John Scott's work in the Crosby movie *Pennies from Heaven* impressed Bing enough to invite the musician to work with him and replace Jimmy Dorsey who went on to other things. Crosby and John Scott were together on radio and recordings from 1937 to 1954.

John Scott Trotter was born in North Carolina and attended the University of North Carolina where he stayed for only a year before joining the band of Hal Kemp where he played piano and was an arranger. When he was invited to work with Bing, Trotter had never been an orchestra leader but he quickly settled into the role where the Kraft Music Hall was on the air on Thursdays for 50 weeks of the year and where he set something of a record by being on the job for 140 consecutive broadcasts.

John Scott was an affable sort who was nicknamed "Uncle John." He towered over most people and usually tipped the scales at about 300 pounds. Uncle John weighed twelve pounds when he was born. He looked like a retired Canadian Football League lineman who had taken on a few pounds over his playing weight. He was a gourmet who would travel far for a dish of Oysters Rockefeller. His was a great sense of humour which he would occasionally bring to the air waves. An example was a guest on one of the Crosby shows who was a home economist during wartime and had written a cookbook about conserving "leftovers." John Scott Trotter walked up to the microphone and like a true gourmet politely asked the lady "What is a leftover?" Obviously he didn't leave anything on his plate.

John Scott in Rhythm on the River with Bing and Mary Martin

There were critics who questioned Bing's choice of John Scott Trotter as music director for his broadcasts and recordings arguing that Bing should have stayed with the big bands and recorded jazz songs. The problem was that the big band leaders were instrumentalists and the band's sound was the priority. Their vocalists were merely appendages most of whom never came close to Bing's success as a singer. Helen Forrest, Margaret Whiting and Bob Eberly were three big band examples.

John Scott believed that his job was to make Bing sound good. Someone once wrote that he wrapped his orchestra around Bing. "White Christmas" and "Swinging on a Star" are just two of many examples.

In commenting on his music director, Bing said he was very good and had "marvellous taste." Once when Spike Jones' comic band backed a song by Bing, the flustered Crosby said, "John Scott don't ever leave me!"

Bing picked his music and had final say on what he sang. Kraft Foods wanted at least one classical piece per broadcast. John Scott was classically trained and obliged. Jimmy Dorsey had not been able to provide classics that were satisfactory.

By the mid-1950s Bing decided to downsize his big budget broadcast effort and had no need for a full Orchestra. Crosby thanked John Scott for his unselfish support, his patience when there were times that impatience could have been justified and generally for looking after his interests and for his friendship.

John Scott Trotter continued to visit the Crosby mansion at Hillsborough near San Francisco where reportedly he joined on one occasion in a redecorating effort. John Scott said he appreciated Bing because he never took for granted his popularity and success. Trotter went on as Music Director on the George Gobel television show and he scored many of the Peanuts cartoon TV shows and was nominated for an Academy Award and Grammy for his work on the movie *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*. He also worked on some of Bing's TV specials.

John Scott Trotter died of cancer in 1975 at the age of 67. He never married and was survived by a sister and two brothers. He was buried at his birth place, Charlotte, North Carolina

Lorne Harasen

(Editor: Many thanks, Lorne. When JST died, Bing wrote a short tribute for our magazine.

> John Scott Trotter is gone. It would be hard to believe, after so many years together, if I hadn't seen his gradual decline and realised how hopeless it was for him to survive. Not because of anything he said or did, but because I knew the history of his illness. He was cheerful up to the very end. I talked to him the night before he was to undergo his final surgery. Jovial - unafraid - always the Southern gentleman. I never knew another man like John. A great musician, exquisite taste in everything, gentle, sensitive, great good humor always, and rigidly loyal to his friends and to his high standards and ideals. I love him.
> Bing

Gary Giddins writing in "A Pocketful of Dreams" talked about JST too.

...Writing for Hal Kemp, Trotter had developed a vibratoless staccato style that he characterized as a refined Schottische rhythm; Johnny Mercer, a fan, more colorfully described it as a "typewriter" attack, clipped and orderly. Trotter had also become accustomed to doubling the melody for singers who needed all the help they could get while Bing preferred an arranger who let the singer alone. He surprised Trotter by emphasizing that opera orchestrations do not double the singer's line and asked him to write "just that way." Bing chose the songs he sang on the air, in contradistinction to those he waxed for Jack Kapp. After each show, Trotter recalled, "Bing would go into the booth and select his numbers for the following week." He listed them on the left-hand page of a loose-leaf binder; a secretary typed them on the right-hand page. Trotter took the selections and went to work arranging them, his job for the next seventeen years.

A formal picture of John Scott

He was a huge but nimble and amiable man, as obsessed with cooking and antiques as he was with music. Though immensely well liked, Trotter was something of a loner, traveling the country to sample fabled restaurants or to London to visit Georg Solti, his life-long friend. His solitary, self-sufficient manner appealed to Bing.

John Scott, a popular weekend and dinner guest, maintained a friendship with the Crosbys long past the KMH and Decca years, encouraged by Bing's second wife, Kathryn. Trotter never married, never lived with a lover; if he was gay, no one knew for certain. Alan Fisher, the Crosby butler during his second marriage, said, "He was totally asexual. Wasn't interested in women, wasn't interested in men, wasn't a closet anything. He was very close to the first Mrs. Crosby and, if anything, closer to the second Mrs. Crosby, who adored him. He formally helped decorate their homes. Extremely good taste, beautifully mannered, witty and funny, the children loved him. John Scott Trotter coming to stay was always a joy. Bing Crosby loved him, I'd have to say that. And if he was going to confide in anyone, I'd almost say it would have been him. They always sat in the library to talk."

(Incidentally, Lorne Harasen's book about his long career titled, The Harasen Line, A Broadcaster's Memoir was published by FriesenPress, Suite 300 – 990 Fort St., Victoria British Columbia, V8V 3K2 Canada (www.friesenpress.com, e-book $4.99, paperback $18.99. Hardcover $29.99). To order it, either go to the publisher direct or order from Lorne at 86 Marquis Crescent, Regina Sk. S4S 6J9 Canada.)

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entires. Please send all advertisements to the Editor.

Gord Atkinson 715-2018 Robertson Rd., Nepean, Ottawa, ON, K2H 1C6, Canada.

Gord's latest book "The Golden Years of Entertainment" is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. Write to Gord direct.

John Bassett "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

STILL WANTED: The following UK 7" vinyl records are required in good condition. Please state prices and postage costs.

Brunswick 45rpm singles: 45-05244, 45-05269

MGM 45rpm EP: ES 3515 "Bing and Satchmo" – Stereo issue only.

John is also seeking:

10" Brunswick LPs: LA8578 "Road to Bali", LA8584 "The Quiet Man" and LA8728 "Curtain Call, Vol. 2".

Michael Crampton
Details on inside front cover.

Michael still has copies of "The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography" by Wig Wiggins and Jim Reilly. £10 + postage (£3 in UK, £11.65 worldwide). Proceeds will go to the ICC funds.

Fred J. Wadsworth, 46 Hereford Walk, Basildon, Essex SS14 3RE, UK

WANTED. On tape or CD BBC Radio2 Tribute to Rosemary Clooney by Russell Davies, 7/7/02 (part 2 only), also anything by Lee Wiley.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society
Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued by the Society and they can now be received in PDF form by email if desired. The regular film nights at the Collingwood Library in Abbotsford for April and June had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 but it is hoped to resume them on August 18. Further dates scheduled for this year are October 20 and December 8.

Internet sites

BING Magazine
This contains a considerable amount of reference material all of which is being updated as new information arises. See **www.bingmagazine.co.uk**

Crosby Fan World
This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker.

Other sites well worth a visit are:
www.BingCrosby.com *run by Bing Crosby Enterprises*

Bing Crosby on Facebook *run by Bing Crosby Enterprises*

Bing Crosby House *on Facebook*

Twitter *@Bingconstantly* and *@Bing_Crosby*

Instagram please follow *'bingsings'*

Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby—"Der Bingle"--The Bing Crosby Fan Page – a Facebook group.

The Early Bing Crosby 1926-1936 *a Facebook group administered by Mike Pearl*

Bing Crosby Appreciation Group *run by Gary Rise on Facebook*

Bing Crosby: The Greatest Crooner (1903-77) *a Facebook group which is run by Kazza Hodgson.*

Jon Oye's Blog *run by ICC stalwart Jon Oye.*

Go to: **http://derbingle.blogspot.com**

The Bing Crosby News Archive *David Lobosco runs this blog at* **http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk**

Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum
www.stevenlewis.info/crosby

Other Appreciation Societies

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Memory Lane
www.memorylane.org.uk
P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England

The acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music. A "*must*" for 78 RPM collectors. Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £16 - UK, £22 - overseas.)

Sinatra Music Society
www.sinatramusicsociety.com
Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK
Tel: 01543-899771

The Society was founded in 1955. A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

Bing's First Record

Articles about Bing's first recording "I've Got the Girt" in recent editions of BING have revived an old controversy. Mark Scrimger gives us some background.

Back in 1980, the Bing Crosby Historical Society issued a tribute record that included Bing's very first recording, "I've Got the Girl." Bill Osborn, who produced and annotated the B.C.H.S. disc, mentioned in his notes that Bing always said that his and Al's singing on the initial recording reminded him of two chipmunks. Bill continued:

"There was a reason for this. After the number had been cut, it was issued at a faster speed to give it a more jazzy flavor. Just recently the speed was modified and returned to the actual speed at which the song was originally recorded."

Bill Osborn's "restoration" pitched the recording in the key of E instead of F, the pitch on the original record and also the key of the sheet music. Generally speaking, Bill's theory was not well-accepted by Crosby collectors. In order to resolve the matter, Wayne Martin (then Editor of BINGANG) approached Bob Ault, a radio engineer and broadcaster, to study the record and give his opinion. Here are his thoughts about the speed of the record which were included in his article in BINGANG June 1989.

...Now comes the other problem--the speed of the recording turntable. After many years of study, I've come to the conclusion that the only thing consistent about the recording speed of the early electrical recordings (1925-30) is their inconsistency.

I once thought that the various record companies actually recorded at the speed they advised customers to set their turntables for. Having given up that misconception several years back, I held on to the idea that at least the electrically-recorded discs were at the right speed. About four years ago, I found that assumption to be incorrect, as well. The idea seemed to be, "If the turntable spins, we can cut a groove." The Berliner Gramophone discs of the 1890's tended to be cut at about 56 rpm, give or take 3 or 4 rpm within a side—the recording turntables being turned by hand. With the introduction of weight-and-governor-driven recording turntables the speed became much more constant within a side, but the speeds could be anywhere from 68 to 84 rpm. Nothing was very scientific yet. Victor prescribed 78 as the correct speed for their discs, but most of their product cut after about 1910 runs in the neighborhood of 75-76 rpm. Columbia recommended 80 as the correct speed, but generally their discs were cut at or below Victor's speed. One exception is a 1923 Original Memphis Five session which was cut at 83 rpm. Although the sound reached the groove by an electronic path, the speeds continued to be quite variable until about 1930. This point was driven home some time back when I was preparing a 1927 English Columbia recording of Liszt's "Les Preludes" with Felix Weingartner and the London Symphony Orchestra for broadcast. All four sides were at different speeds, the first at about 74 rpm and each one slightly faster with the last at about 77.5 rpm.

"Magic Notes"
TRADE MARK.
Columbia
THIS RECORD MADE BY PATENTED PROCESS MUST NOT BE SOLD BELOW PRICE FIXED BY PATENTEES.
COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE (AUST.) LTD., SYDNEY, N.S.W. MADE IN AUSTRALIA
I'VE GOT THE GIRL—FOX TROT
(Donaldson)
(Speed 80)
THE CHARLESTON SERENADERS
With Vocal Chorus
0688

The Australian version with an advertised speed of 80

Played back at 78.26 rpm (the "standard" speed, but still 1.74 slower than Columbia was claiming at the time), "I've Got the Girl" plays rather well with the orchestra in the key of F, but when the voices of Crosby and Rinker come in, there is definitely something wrong. Human voices don't normally sound like that. Some have said that Bing and Al just sang that way then. They didn't, either! This was only two months before their first recording with Whiteman "Wistful and Blue." The Jazum issue retains the 78.26 speed, and this fact made my figuring possible, for the turntable I used for this bit of detective work was calibrated for variable speed

16 by tenths of a percent. The Bing Crosby Historical Society disc was obviously produced by someone who was on the right track; they just didn't go quite far enough, apparently thinking, "It couldn't possibly be that far off." Well, believe me, folks, it can. "I've Got the Girl" was cut at 70.5 rpm!

The B.C.H.S. disc has the orchestra playing in E, and the voices sound better, but I checked with another friend, Herbert O. Freer, who spent many years arranging for dance bands, and he said that the only time that key would have been used was when the orchestra was almost entirely made up of strings, with the wind instrument parts kept very simple. In other words, for a group with the instrumentation and style of Clark, it would be pure insanity. E-flat, however, is a wonderful key for an orchestra like Clark's--the key fitting all the instruments (except perhaps the violin) like a glove; and what's more, when the disc is pitched in E-flat the familiar voices are clearly heard—sounding just like we know they did from their Whiteman recordings (Bing is the lower voice).

Bob Ault

Mark Scrimger has never been happy with this finding and he wrote to us recently saying:

Looking back through some old copies of BINGANG, I came across the article by Bob Ault which dealt with Bing's first record. He is of the slow-it-down camp. For me it's hard to believe Columbia wanted 78 rpms slowed down to 70.5 rpm without any notice of this fact. I once owned a floor model Brunswick record player that had a speed control on it but you could tune it several notches up or down but no speeds were indicated. I always thought this was to be used for setting dance tempos for party goers. It would also serve to make the selection play longer if the speed was reduced.

I take issue with him saying that their voices are high on "I've Got the Girl" and are more natural on the first Victors they recorded with Whiteman. To my ears, "Wistful and Blue" and "Pretty Lips" also contain the same high pitched singing as on 824–D. The Whiteman arrangers were able to bring it back down to a more natural range. The temptation is to make 1920s Bing sound like 1930-40s Bing. Some LPs slowed down 1930s radio broadcast songs to sound more like 1940s Bing. Likewise, some 30 or 60 minute 1940s radio shows were sped up to fit the 25 minutes of playing time on each side of an LP. Bing's voice is higher as a result and his vocal timbre changes.

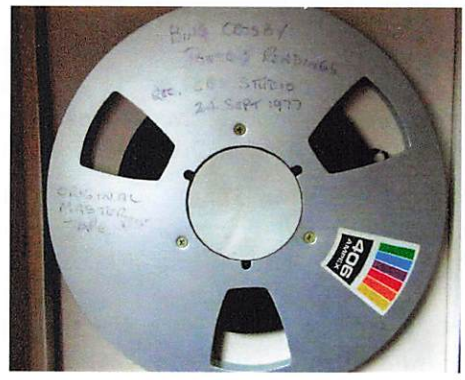
Mark Scrimger

Poetry Readings Found in Their Original Format

John Bassett has added yet another very rare item to his amazing collection of Crosbyana. He tells us more.

I am elated to reveal that I have recently come into possession of a very valuable and unique item of Crosbyana.

The collection at "Bingville" now boasts the original studio Master Tape of Bing's 1977 poetry readings. Recorded at CBS in London, the readings are preserved on 1/4-inch wide Ampex magnetic tape and housed on a 10.5-inch spool. The recording, conceived and engineered by ICC member Noel Mould, is the jewel in the crown, for no other copy exists anywhere in the world of this tremendously rare item.



As can be seen in the photograph, the handwriting on the spool poses a small discographical query, for it clearly gives the recording date as being the 24th September 1977 and not the 14th as we have always been led to believe. One must assume, however, that this is merely a clerical error.

The tape is accompanied by typewritten transcriptions of three of the five poetry items along with annotations by Noel, identifying various pieces of classical music which could be used if the poetry became commercially viable. As we all know, 33 years were to elapse before the readings finally appeared on a commercially issued CD but they were given different musical backing tracks to those originally suggested by Noel.

The story behind this recording originally appeared in BING-49, March 1978, and it is worth reprinting here, albeit in an edited form, for the benefit of the 'newer fellas' (and as a reminder to our long-standing members of how this historic session came into being).

Here is Noel's own account of the events as they transpired:

Early in 1977 during an exchange of letters with Bing I asked him if he would be interested in doing a few poetry readings which would be set to music - light classical music' - which, according to "Call Me Lucky", would be favourites of his. Bing replied, "I don't think they would be a commercial proposition but you certainly have my permission to go ahead and try". This I did. Speaking to

Ken Barnes by telephone I told him of what Bing had written and Ken told me he would try and fit it into one of the "Seasons" sessions. So it was arranged that they would be recorded about mid-September in London at the CBS studios.

The weekend before I was due to fly from Ireland to London to do the recordings, Bing and I chatted on the phone from his flat. I gave him a rundown of my final selections and it was quite a long and highly enjoyable parley.

The final session for the "Seasons" album turned out to be 14th September and it was arranged that the poems would be recorded immediately after Bing had finished the songs. On that day at the appointed time I presented myself at CBS and was directed to the studio being used for the session. There was no doubt that I was at the correct one because Bing's voice was coming out loud and clear in the control room. "Summer Wind" was being taped and what a fine job Bing was making of it.

At the completion of the song, Bing boomed through the speakers, "Let's do the poetry", so I quickly joined him in the box and we went over the selected poems so that Bing could make his choice. We were in business, as they say!

The first to be recorded was a lovely piece called "Around the Corner", quite short but poignant. I was amazed that with no rehearsal worth talking about, Bing read it as if he had known it all his life. Next came a piece by Longfellow called "The Singers", then Bing went on to do "If" by Rudyard Kipling, "Lucy Gray" by Wordsworth and lastly "The Slave's Dream" by Longfellow. A couple of slips occurred on this and they will need careful editing to correct. We had run out of studio time by then and there was no chance of recording it again.

Still, Bing had done it and I was tremendously grateful that he had taken the time to help a nobody like me.

Ken Barnes told me of a moment of alarm earlier when Bing had arrived in the studio and said he couldn't remember where the poetry scripts were! They were not, he said, where he had left them the previous night.

Eventually they were found - in Bing's dressing room!

In the late 1970s, the poetry readings caught the attention of the press and the following extracts are taken from two different reports which appeared in a popular Belfast newspaper, together with photographs of Noel holding the actual tape spool.

BELFAST TELEGRAPH, 15th October 1977

The Old Groaner has left his No. 1 Northern Ireland fan a priceless legacy. For Noel Mould from Antrim has on tape the last studio recording Bing Crosby made. And it is unique - Crosby reading poetry. Telephone engineer Noel taped him at the CBS studios in London last month. "That was his last studio recording", said Noel. "I now plan to add some classical music. I don't know whether or not I'll have it issued on a commercial basis but the Master Tape I have is priceless".

Noel Mould in a publicity photograph taken in the late 1970s

BELFAST TELEGRAPH, 28th November 1978

"Noel Mould has met his idol, the late Bing Crosby, several times and there are photographs of them together on the walls of his home. In fact the two of them became such firm friends during the last few years of the singer's life that he agreed to record some poems by Kipling and others for Noel during one of his frequent visits to Britain. Noel has turned down offers from record companies for the readings Bing taped for him."

With the Master Tape now re-located in Essex, I can confirm that this highly treasured part of Bing's legacy has been given a safe and secure home in my collection, and I am delighted to take advantage of this opportunity to share this important news with the ICC's membership.

John Bassett

(Editor: This acquisition by John is an important addition to his incredible Crosby collection. The poems were much sought after for many years although "pirate" poorish quality versions of the original recordings did surface on a CD called "White Christmas" (GET Archives 101) some years ago. In these, Bing announces each poem and at the end of "The Slave's Dream" he can be heard saying "Ye Gods. And that's it for today. I'd would like to hear that er, yeah...." Ken Barnes and Pete Moore did add music to the original recordings and they were eventually released in 2010 on the Collectors' Choice Music CD "Seasons" produced by Robert Bader of Bing Crosby Enterprises.

In our last issue, John mentioned the rare LP "Sunday in Hollywood with Ann Blyth and Bing Crosby". Jeremy Rose contacted me and sheepishly admitted that the LP was in the huge collection of LPs left by Gwen Harvey which he had to sell on to a dealer. He contacted the dealer but the LP had already been disposed of. No one has yet sent me a tape or CD of the album I can pass on to John which is a pity. There must be someone out there who has still got it.)

The Ariel Susianna

John Bassett's article in our last issue about the rarest Bing 78 produced a call from Stan White who remembered radio DJ Paul Barnes sending him a photo of the label some years ago. Paul was researching a possible article about the Norfolk record dealer David Moore (see www.78rpm.co.uk/) and he had photographed what David considered to be his rarest disc – "Susianna".

Stan mentioned that Paul had discovered that the company which issued the Ariel records was based in Sheffield and this led me to investigate further. I came across a website maintained by Michael Thomas of Birmingham and he has a specific page all about Ariel Records.

(See www.mgthomas.co.uk/Records/LabelPages/Ariel.htm)

Here's an extract.

The Ariel Grand Record (to give it the correct title) was produced for Messrs J. G. Graves of Sheffield, England, who sold them on a mail order basis. Graves was a huge supply warehouse which started about 1886 and, upon John Graves' death in 1945, was taken over by Great Universal Stores.

The label was available from 1911 until 1938, an amazing length of time for a store label. The masters came from up to 10 different suppliers over the years, but from a dance band perspective, the most interesting ones are those from Zonophone (many catalogue series, with Yy prefix matrix numbers) and Parlophone (the 4000 and Z-4500 catalogue series), both of which are fairly common. 99% of dance band issues were pseudonymous, usually labelled "Ariel Dance Orchestra" or, sometimes, anonymous.

The label design varied only very slightly over the 27 years, the main change being the simplifying of the design in about 1930 for the Z-4500 series.

In the case of the Crosby record (No. 4364), we know that it was originally recorded on January 25, 1929 with Sam Lanin and His Famous Players and issued on the OKeh label (a subsidiary of Columbia Records) in the USA.

It was then issued in the UK by Parlophone (no. R-339) and they subsequently supplied it to Ariel who put it out as a recording by the Ariel Dance Orchestra. The other side of the Ariel record has a song called "I Faw Down An' Go Boom!" by the Ariel Dance Orchestra (alias Fred Hall and His Sugar Babies). This originated from another OKeh label disc (No. 41183) recorded on January 24, 1929 and also issued in the UK by Parlophone (No. R-338).

So much for the rare record, but what about Bing's vocal performance? Fred Reynolds, writing in "The Crosby Collection 1926-1977" (part one), described it as follows.

The orchestra plunges without introduction into the first chorus with trombone lead in the bridge and trumpet lead in the last eight bars. The second chorus is taken by Bing with clarinet patterns in the background. After a verse by the band it continues with the final chorus in which the bridge is a splendid J. Dorsey (sax) solo. Crosby's phrasing is delightful and the rhyming of "precious" with "fresh as" is taken in his stride.

Gary Giddins in A Pocketful of Dreams thought Bing "demonstrated confidence at a date by a Sam Lanin outfit, reflecting Spencer Williams's "Susianna" with a felt ebullience, cannily shading the lyrics with his measured breathing."

The track can of course be heard on The Chronological Bing Crosby – Jonzo 5.

A Christmas Sing with Bing

Frans van der Kolff examines an important series.

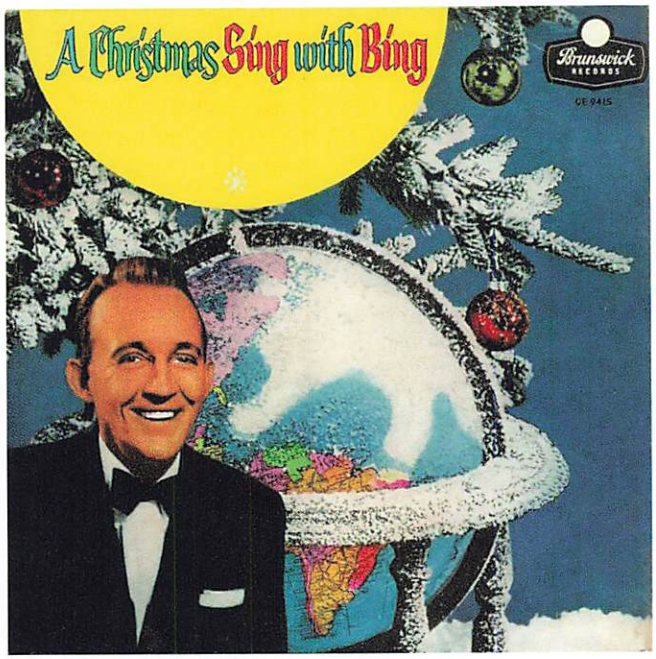
For an aspiring young Crosby collector, the early 1970's were a confusing time. New releases were few and far between; reissues (in The Netherlands) were not readily available when you didn't know your way around the record shops or the collector's circuit.

In those days I had no Crosby collection to speak of. My father had one 78-rpm record of Bing, 'Lily of Laguna' coupled with 'Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie'. And of course I knew Bing's Christmas recordings - well, a few of them. That was the state of my knowledge of Bing and his music when I bought my first record of him: the Bing 'n' Basie LP of 1972. Now, that was quite a different sound compared with what little I had hitherto heard. It didn't diminish my interest though. My next purchase, shortly thereafter, was a double LP The Bing Crosby Story Volume One, The Early Jazz Years 1928-1932, a CBS release from 1967. Again, a different sound altogether. What to make of this Bing Crosby, who sang in so many styles, in so many ways, in so many 'voices', over such a long period of time? Luckily, I came in contact with the International Crosby Circle. By chance I happened to hear Reg Bristo's address on a radio programme and quickly scribbled it down. Sheer luck, as this was decades before the times you could look things up on the internet.

The collector's circuit opened up new vista's (movies, radio and TV performances) and much-needed knowledge about Bing's long career. With membership of the ICC also came contacts with Dutch fans and collectors, who could direct me to the specialty shops in my country, in particular a small shop in The Hague aptly named "Only Yesterday". It's there that I spent much of my first paychecks and one of the first LP's I obtained was "A Christmas Sing with Bing, which brings us - at last, you will think - to the topic of this article.

"A Christmas Sing with Bing - Around the World" was released by Decca Records in 1956. It was taken from a CBS radio broadcast which was transmitted on December 24, 1955. The album was very successful, both by critics and by the public.

Variety, on December 8, 1956, noted: "This borrowing from the CBS radio program makes one of the solidest holiday packages to come along, a prime candidate for immediate store exposure. Singer brings superb projection to nine out of nineteen selected Christmas carols and hymns, with smoothest of assists from Norman Luboff choir and Paul Weston's Orchestra. Other bands are contributed by various Canadian and European choruses, including the Vatican choir. Descriptive intros of each number by Crosby add a fine personalized touch, and his arrangement of "Silent Night" should be on every jock's Christmas Eve agenda. Cover, featuring Crosby photo backed by



United Nations motif, is sound sales bait."

And a sound sales bait it was. The record, which was released initially as an LP and as a set of three EP's, later on audio cassette and more recently as CD, mp3-download and streaming media, was a best-selling hit. I counted no less than eighteen different (re-)releases of the LP in the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, The Netherlands and Spain. No doubt there are many more. Sepia Records included the entire album in their CD "Bing Crosby, Through the Years Volume 10" which was released in May, 2012 and, should you require the original vinyl copy, they are still for sale - starting at $35 - in Jeff Bezos' shopping malls around the world.

Billboard (November 16, 1963) mentions that Decca has "re-recorded for stereo two of its all-time best-selling Christmas items [among which] Bing Crosby's A Christmas Sing with Bing." Over the years the album is seen in many different guises. Could it perhaps be that "A Christmas Sing with Bing" has, very quietly, turned into another million seller for Bing by now?

The success of the first broadcast, no doubt coupled with the success of the LP-release, led to a regular annual series. Let's take a look at the background of the programme.

Following the demise in the spring of 1954 of The Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, Bing's traditional weekly variety show, Billboard (on October 10, 1953) voiced the opinion of no doubt many people hoping "that Bing will pay some attention to develop a really televisable format." However, that was not to be at that time. Bing decided to replace his weekly radio show by a five days a week fifteen minute 'disc-jockey' format

show. Thus, in 1954, radio listeners missed out on a full-fledged, half-hour Christmas program hosted by Crosby for the first time in almost twenty years.

In 1955, this situation was remedied when Bing, the undisputed voice of Christmas at the time, embarked on one of his most ambitious radio projects ever: a transcribed one-hour Christmas spectacular featuring guest artists that spanned the entire globe.

On the morning of December 19, 1955, Bing recorded his CBS radio special in CBS Studio B in Hollywood. Paul Weston and his Orchestra, supported by The Norman Luboff Choir, provided the backing to Bing's vocals. Announcer was Ken Carpenter, the show was written by Bill Morrow, directed by Murdo MacKenzie and produced by Bill Morrow and Sam Pierce.

The show was broadcast five days later at 9.00 pm on CBS on Christmas Eve and it was carried by some 200 stations along with hook-ups on the CBC, AFRS, and VOA for a truly global listening experience. For the 'around the world' aspect, the program included cut-in's of carols and hymns from France, Italy, The Netherlands and Canada, along with stops in the U.S. at St. Louis, Salt Lake City, and Hollywood.

The Insurance Company of North America laid out some $30,000 for this Christmas Eve hour and that might be figured as cheap considering the promotion values. CBS added up the statistics, claiming over 70,000 letters poured in for the 'What Christmas Means to Me' letter writing contest for children with nothing but on the air advertising and no premiums or prizes save to a single winner. The winner was seven year-old Delores Short who had spent her whole life in Pine Ridge, Kentucky Children's Home. She duly read her letter on the show. Bing promised her a bicycle and gifts for the other kids in the home.

The show was scripted as though it was live and listeners heard Bing introducing his own songs and choirs from other parts of the world as though it was all happening on Christmas Eve. This was a practice Bing had experimented with during the second and last season (1953-1954) of his show for General Electric. It was a big change from the hitherto used format of a live show with an audience in attendance which was edited afterwards. Most shows of the GE second season were assembled piecemeal and put together for transmission. Usually audiences were not present and recordings of earlier audience reactions were dubbed in creating the illusion of a live recording. Typically Bing would spend Sunday's recording material for the shows. Expensive guest stars were rarely used this season - with the notable exception of Frank Sinatra - and Bing employed his sons Gary, Dennis, Phillip and Lindsay frequently on the show. Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires were not used in this second series and a regular spot was established for the Orchestra to play an instrumental version of a well-known song.

Bing had not recorded with Paul Weston before and it turned out to be a happy combination. Weston had been music director at Capitol Records and then at

Paul Weston's Capitol Records publicity

Columbia where he built a reputation for his mood music with albums such as "Music for Dreaming" and many others. He was married to Jo Stafford who worked with Bing on a number of occasions and also later in this series. Norman Luboff was the founder and conductor of the choir bearing his name, one of the leading choral groups between the 1950's and 1970's.

Following the success of the first show, plans were made for a second show and this was broadcast over the CBS network on December 24, 1956. The sponsor was again the Insurance Company of North America. The same basic formula was followed with the addition of the inclusion of Maurice Chevalier in Paris and Sarah Churchill, actress and daughter of Winston Churchill, in London, extending their compliments of the season to Hollywood. Crosby added "Adeste Fideles" and "Jingle Bells" to five of the carols he used the previous year and Rosemary Clooney was heard singing "Away in a Manger", by way of a lullaby to her children, Miguel and Maria Ferrer. Nine-year-old Edward Tuchawena, from a Hopi Indian Village 80 miles outside Flagstaff, Arizona, read his winning letter of 'What Christmas Means to Me'. Canada was represented by a choir from Ottawa, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir returned to sing a movement from Handel's "Messiah". The same recording of "Tu scendi dalle stelle" by the Vatican Choir from the 1955 broadcast was also played.

Variety (on January 2, 1957) reviewed the broadcast saying, "On Christmas Eve, a songfest with Bing Crosby, interlaced with other show biz personalities, as well as pickups from many corners of the globe, proved to be good listening, showcasing radio as a still dazzling entertainment medium, the mobility of which is hard to beat…"

As a collector, I marvelled for many years how nice it would be to have a series of records released with the songs of these Christmas shows. Somehow it took me a long time to realise the potential was different from what I thought it was: the first six shows appear to have relied almost entirely on permutations from a master tape of around a dozen traditional carols by Crosby plus "White Christmas"! Nonetheless, I feel a double (or triple) CD-release of this master tape in combination with the efforts from the series' later editions by Bing and his co-stars, is sadly overlooked.

In retrospect the repetition of the songs is glaringly obvious, especially when one knows how Bing's later General Electric shows and the fifteen minute shows of 1955 to 1962 came about. But after an interval of 52 weeks, the average listener would not have been aware of the 'deception' or indeed, worried too much.

December 24, 1957 saw the third broadcast with the same cast and sponsor. Bing repeated six of the songs heard in the first two programs. In the same program, Gary Crosby (still in army uniform at that time) exchanged greetings with his father from Salzburg while introducing an Austrian choir singing "Stille Nacht". The Vatican Choir recording from the 1955 broadcast was again used and another excellent number was rendered by a Dutch children's choir from The Hague. Canada was represented by Manécanterie des Petits Chanteurs de la Vierge, from Montreal, singing "Les Anges Dans Nos Campagnes", and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sang another movement from Handel's "Messiah". Other numbers featured choirs from Minneapolis and Jerusalem in addition to one number by the Insurance Company of North America's chorus. Unlike the previous two years, no children's letters were read on the program. *Variety* (on December 31, 1957) thought that, "'Sing with Bing' is developing into a standard Christmas Eve radio offering...Taped in advance, [the] show nevertheless came through with the right holiday flavour..."

Four days earlier, Bing appeared on ABC-TV in an episode of The Frank Sinatra Show entitled "Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank". It's once more testimony of Sinatra's admiration for Bing that he chose to direct the show himself as well as film it in colour, years before ABC began broadcasting in colour. The 35mm filmed colour version was discovered in storage by Nancy Sinatra in 2001 and released on DVD in 2003. In the show, Bing gives his 'Christmas Sing with Bing' LP to Frank Sinatra as a Christmas present. Decca and the Insurance Company of North America will have been delighted as well.

Christmas Eve, 1958 saw the fourth in the series and of the seven carols and songs used, six had been heard at least twice, previously. The sole variation was provided by the first appearance of Kathryn Crosby who duetted with her husband on "Away in a Manger", dedicated to 'Tex', the four month-old Harry Lillis III who "is listening at home to the radio, right now." Canada was represented by the St. George's Cathedral Choir from Kingston, Ontario, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir

The advert for the 1959 show

again made an appearance, singing "Beautiful Savior". Instead of the usual recording from the Vatican Choir, this year had the Roman Singers of Sacred Music sing an original composition, "Christus Est". Additional music was provided by choirs from Anchorage, Alaska; Sydney, Australia; Albertson, New York; Cannes, France; Honolulu, Hawaii, and the men from the nuclear submarine USS Nautilus. *Variety* commented (on December 31, 1958) "CBS Radio established the Christmas Sing with Bing pattern four years ago and it still holds up as an easy and comfortable programming segment for Yule listening. With Crosby crooning and emceeing around-the-world pickup for Christmas festivities, the hour rolls by in a familiar but still enjoyable way."

The show of 1959 seems to be quite elusive. It is missing in my collection (not that that is a standard for its elusiveness by any means). Little is known about the programme, apart from the fact that the usual participants were in attendance and that there were pickups from Salt Lake City, Honolulu, the Vatican

City, the Crown Colony in Hong Kong, Toronto, Paris and Mexico. Bing sang "White Christmas" and featured a new song called "It's Christmas". This song was repeated in the show of the following year but, although recorded by others, it does not appear to have been used by Bing in any other context. Curious readers can hear the song on YouTube, by the way.

A change was made to the 'around the world' theme for the Christmas Eve, 1960 programme. The international flavour of season's past was dropped for a stay at home session with Rosemary Clooney, Bing's regular CBS radio partner, her husband José Ferrer and Bing's own wife Kathryn. They employed a wide category of Christmas songs from the newer pop standards right down to old-fashioned carols. There was a medley of some of Crosby's Christmas pop hits with Clooney consisting of "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town", "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Here Comes Santa Claus" and a rendition of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" by the entire cast. Ferrer added a reading of "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" - the 1897 New York Sun editorial.

Variety (on December 28, 1960) welcomed the change in format and also commented: "This was the sixth Christmas Sing with Bing and the Yuletide Eve special is well on its way to becoming an institution which is all for the best since Crosby has that special sense of hominess and belonging that adds an extra kind of warmth to a season when the Christmas song-fests tend to lose their individuality. The Sing with Bing remains something special, to look forward to each year... Far too many commercials for Insurance Company of North America and pretty hard sell at that. Sing with Bing being almost an institution it seems about time the commercial aspect of it be accorded appropriately similar treatment."

Bing, Rosie, Jose Ferrer and Kathryn join in singing "The Twelve Days of Christmas" on the 1960 show

The seventh broadcast was heard on December 24, 1961 and Kathryn Crosby, Edgar Bergen and Jo Stafford (a late substitute for Rosemary Clooney who was ill) comprised the guest list, alongside the usual cast. Bing's version of "Joy to the World", from the inaugural show and "Jingle Bells", first heard on the second program, had now become 'regulars'. Bing and Jo Stafford duetted on a medley of "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town", "Silver Bells" and "Here Comes Santa Claus". Bing and his wife sang "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" together. A clip edited from a 1955 edition of The Charlie McCarthy Show was inserted, featuring nine year-old Candice Bergen playing the part of 'Charlie McCarthy's sister'.

The final show in the series was transmitted on December 24, 1962. Earlier that year, Bing had recorded a new album of Christmas songs entitled "I Wish You a Merry Christmas" and the opportunity was taken to promote this. Kathryn Crosby, Rosemary Clooney and Johnny Mercer covered eight of the fourteen titles on the recently completed album. Crosby started with the title song, "I Wish You a Merry Christmas". Clooney sang "The Littlest Angel" and "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" and joined Mercer for "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town". Mercer sang his own individual version of "The Glow-Worm". Bing joined Clooney and Mercer for "Winter Wonderland".

Somewhat reluctantly, Bing had started making television appearances in the late forties and in the fifties, which were usually filmed in advance. In 1954, we saw his radio show had reduced in status from a major weekly program to a daily fifteen minute show, but after the success of the film *High Society* and hit records such as "True Love" and "Around the World", Bing was tempted to become more heavily involved in television. A big breakthrough came in 1957 with the award-winning Edsel Show. Afterwards, Bing settled into a routine of making at least two television specials each year, but he never really attempted to dominate the sector as he had other media. He eschewed a weekly series while singers such as Perry Como and later, Andy Williams, embraced such exposure enthusiastically with considerable benefits accruing to their record sales and to their long-term images.

Interesting in this respect is the fact that on the same day that the final show of "A Christmas Sing with Bing" was broadcast, ABC-TV screened "The Bing Crosby Show" with Mary Martin and Andre Previn as guests; Bing's first special for ABC in colour. Two major shows by the same major artist on the same day is quite unusual and I believe it was a sign of the times. The days of radio as the designated platform for the top entertainers of the day were really over in the 1960's.

Bing's annual Christmas show tradition began on radio in 1936 where it continued through 1962, with the exception of a 1954 show. After the series of hour-long radio Christmas specials described in this article, Bing made the transfer to television. Bing's annual holiday tradition began on TV in 1957, and from 1961 until his death in 1977 he continued to entertain countless millions with his annual Christmas shows.

And, did you know? In a way Bing still does!

Every year, since at least 2015, crowds of over 2,000 people gather at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles for a screening of a specially created sing along version of the film *White Christmas*, under the auspices of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association and Paramount Pictures: "Raise your voice! Sing with fellow revelers - plus Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney, Danny Kaye, Vera-Ellen, and the film's remastered soundtrack - at this special screening of the 1954 holiday classic, presented with lyrics on screen. And you might want to bundle up - you never know what might happen when a couple of thousand people dream of a white Christmas together."

What a nice thought!

I am very much indebted to Malcolm Macfarlane and Lionel Pairpoint for their research and articles on the subject; in particular:

The "A Christmas Sing with Bing" and "The Bing Crosby Show for General Electric" articles in Wikipedia - by and large these texts are for the greater part written and researched by Malcolm Macfarlane.

A Christmas Sing with Bing - by Lionel Pairpoint, in BING, No. 129; reprinted in No. 162.

Frans van der Kolff

Celluloid Crosby

David Lobosco goes back to a 1940 film this time around.

My favorite part of writing a review of Bing's movies, is when I must pick which film to watch next. It really is a dilemma as to which movie to choose. It is a nice problem to have though! This time around I picked a film I had not seen in years – 1940's *Rhythm on the River*. I forgot what a good movie it is! *Rhythm on the River* was the second movie Bing would work on in 1940. He had just completed *If I Had My Way*, and he went right to work on this film. Shot between May and July of 1940, the film's New York premiere would be on August 28, 1940. Originally titled "Ghost Music" – I think the name *Rhythm on the River* was a much better title for a light hearted Bing Crosby flick.

The Story

The movie starts out with a successful Broadway songwriter (played brilliantly by Basil Rathbone) talking with his assistant (also played brilliantly by Oscar Levant) about how he had writer's block and could not write his own songs anymore. For a while he had been using ghost writers, because since the love of his life "died" he had been unable to write songs. Oscar Levant in his abrasive way reminds Rathbone that his love did not "die". She ran out on Rathbone, got married, and just "got fat". Rathbone uses this as an excuse not to write as well as to make others feel sorry for him.

Bing works with Oscar Levant

Bing Crosby is working as the melody ghost writer for Rathbone and has little ambition to be a songwriter. Bing just wants to run a catfish boat. When Rathbone's ghost lyricist writer dies, Basil finds a fan letter that an upcoming poet (Mary Martin) has written him, and he gets her to write lyrics for him. He has a deadline in three weeks to write the score for his next musical. Bing had already completed the music for Rathbone, but Mary Martin was having trouble writing the accompanying lyrics because of the noise in her boarding house. A band led by Harry Barris and Wingy Manone had taken up residence and all they played was the "Tiger Rag". So, Basil not thinking, sends Mary Martin up to Bing's uncle's inn to relax. Guess who is also there but Bing himself!

At first Bing and Mary Martin clash. Mary thinks Bing has absolutely no ambition. Well, she is partially right but discovers Bing writes beautiful melodies and she writes lyrics to some music she has heard Bing playing ("Only Forever"). Bing begins to fall for Mary, but when he starts to sing a song that Mary thought Basil Rathbone had written, she thinks Bing is a music thief, and she heads back to New York to confront Rathbone. Bing does the same thing, and they are surprised to find each other in Rathbone's office where they realize that Rathbone has been playing them both.

Bing and Mary have fallen in love now, and they decide to go off on their own as a songwriting team. However, the various song publishers think that they are stealing from Basil Rathbone because the music sounds so much like his work. Finally, they go to one last song publisher (played briefly by William Frawley), and whilst he does not want their song he likes Mary's singing, and he wants her for nightclub work. At first Mary refuses. Broke, Bing gives Rathbone the song "Only Forever", which he wrote with Mary as security for a $200 advance on future music work to enable him to buy Mary a dress for her to take up the offered nightclub work.

Inadvertently, when Rathbone's Broadway backers want a sample of the score he is writing, Oscar Levant gives them "Only Forever". Bing and Mary confront Rathbone and he gives them a sob story about his love dying, and again Oscar Levant plainly tells them that she "just got fat". Basil bravely decides to do the right thing and announces on radio that "Only Forever" has not actually been written by him and he tells everyone that Bing and Mary are his new protégés who are going to collaborate with him on his new show. Oscar Levant has a great line when Basil is announcing it and says, "He'd take a bow at his own funeral". The film ends with Bing and Mary announcing their plans to marry and singing "Only Forever" together.

The Cast

The movie is full of great supporting actors who really add to the film. Character actor Charley Grapewin plays Bing's uncle. Fresh from his role as Uncle Henry in *The Wizard of Oz* for MGM, he was loaned out to Paramount for this film. As I said earlier, character actor William Frawley appears as a song publisher as well as Charles Lane, another familiar face in hundreds of movies. Former Rhythm Boy Harry Barris has a nice role as the band leader, although the band in the film was that of Wingy Manone. Manone was a jazz favorite, but he had lost his right arm in a streetcar accident when he was ten. He had a prosthetic arm and basically played the trumpet with one hand. It is interesting to watch him in the few scenes he did have to see how he is always hiding his handicap.

Wingy Manone and Bing with Harry Barris looking on

Also, Bing's cohorts from his Kraft Music Hall radio show appear in the film. His bandleader John Scott Trotter played himself, while his announcer Ken Carpenter played another announcer by the name of Teddy Gardner who promotes Kelso's Cucumber Cream for the ladies instead of Miracle Whip.

The Songs

Like the majority of Bing's lighthearted comedic romps, the music and singing were the main draw. This movie, while it had a compelling plot, was no different. Songwriters Johnny Burke and James Monaco wrote a very good score which turned out to be their last work together. The most successful song in the movie was "Only Forever", the love song, and it would be a very big hit for Bing. Another song "That's for Me" would be a minor chart success for him too. He also recorded the title song – "Rhythm on the River". His commercial recording of it however pales in comparison to the number he shoots in the movie. In the film he is at the pawn shop, and he gets his friends' band instruments out of hock. Bing sings the song and has so much fun with it – even doing some decent drum work. It is one of the most carefree numbers I think Bing ever shot in the movies. It was and is a high point of the movie for me. Bing also sings two other songs "When the Moon Comes over Madison Square" (a horrible song in my opinion) and "What Would Shakespeare Have Said" (which he never recorded commercially). Mary Martin got to sing two outstanding solo numbers. Director Victor Schertzinger wrote the torch song "I Don't Want to Cry Anymore" which Mary sang exceptionally. It was also recorded by Billie Holliday in the 1950s. The other song, which Burke and Monaco wrote for her was the fun "Ain't It a Shame about Mame". That was another favorite of mine.

Bill Frawley listens to Bing and Mary with John Scott Trotter in attendance

Reviews

Author Gary Giddins in his second Bing biography "Swinging on a Star - The War Years" seems to enjoy *Rhythm on the River*, and remarks how the film was a turning point for Bing as an actor in the 1940s. More of Bing's personality was rolled into his characters. Gary wrote that the movie began as a treatment written in Germany by Billy Wilder (Wilder was an admirer of Bing and would direct him in 1948's *The Emperor Waltz*). However, Wilder was crushed when Paramount brought in Dwight Taylor to replace him and Charles Brackett as scriptwriters. Also Bing asked his gag writer Barney Dean to punch up the script. Although Wilder got a writing credit on *Rhythm on the River*, in later years he maintained that this was undeserved.

Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* enjoyed it: *"It's a very funny thing about this picture business—or this musical picture business, we should say. One producer may come along with a super colossal whopper, all dressed up in fancy pants and boasting a high-class score and folks will find themselves sitting watch on a dull and pretentious fizzle. And then along will come Paramount, say, with an entry such as "Rhythm on the River" which opened at the Paramount yesterday—an after-you sort of entry which gives the odd impression of having been casually shot "off the cuff"—and, behold, it turns out to be one of the most like-able musical pictures of the season... What's there to it? Well, there's Bing, whose frank and guileless indifference, whose apparent dexterity with ad libs is, in this case, beautiful to behold. There is Miss Martin, who is ever so comfortable to look at and who sells a very nice song. There is also Oscar Levant, slumming from "Information, Please," who makes up in bashless impudence what he lacks in looks, charm, poise and ability to act. There are Mr. Rathbone, Charley Grapewin and Wingy Manone, who plays a hot trumpet, and there are several tuneful numbers, especially "Rhythm on the River" and "Ain't It a Shame about Mame." Add them all up and they total a progressively ingratiating picture—one that just slowly creeps up and sort of makes itself at home. It's a funny business, all right."*

I feel the film is pretty much perfect although there is one scene that bothers me. On Bing's Kraft show he was always ribbing his bandleader John Scott Trotter about his weight. In the film, he meets John Scott Trotter in the song publishing office. Although he has supposedly just met this famous bandleader, he starts making fun of the bandleader's weight. If he had just met Trotter, he certainly would not make fun of him. It is a minor scene in the film, but one that has always bothered me.

The pairing of Bing with Mary Martin was wonderful. They would appear together in one other film – 1941's *Birth of the Blues*, and they were supposed to make 1942's *Holiday Inn* together until Mary got pregnant and had to withdraw from the film. They would go on to appear in numerous radio shows and a television special together. *Rhythm on the River* is often the forgotten movie in Bing's filmography, but it is a fun picture to watch. Oscar Levant's scene stealing moments alone are worth it! Add in a great supporting cast and the genius of Bing Crosby, and you have a wonderful movie!

David Lobosco *davidlobosco@yahoo.com*

Tobaccoland On Parade

David Currington spotted a hitherto unknown Bing film appearance on YouTube recently. It's a 27-minute 1950 tobacco industry film *Tobaccoland On Parade* which attempts to show why the tobacco industry is good for everybody in the United States of America! It makes sports more fun, it shows how important to commerce smoking is and it shows how tobacco is processed. The film finishes with a carton of Chesterfields being shown with the caption "Chesterfield Cigarettes – They Satisfy." It would be very hard to stay awake all through it!

Bob Hope and Arthur Godfrey are seen, Perry Como sings "Because" and at the very end, Bing is seen singing a short version of "Swinging on a Star" in front of a CBS microphone. To view it, go to:

YouTube **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t994eFv2JYE**

The film was made by Louis de Rochemont (1899 - 1978) who was known for creating, along with Roy E. Larsen from Time, Inc., the monthly theatrically shown newsreels *The March of Time.*

I could not trace whether *Tobaccoland On Parade* was actually seen in cinemas but it was available for hire and a number of Lions Clubs across the USA showed it in 1951.

Bing appeared in a similar film for Chesterfield in 1951 called *The Fifth Freedom.*

The Bells of St. Mary's Review

A review by Hel Harding-Jones of the new Blu-ray release appeared on the digitalfix.com site on October 18 last year and with grateful thanks to the digitalfix people it is reproduced here.

It was the film listed on the marquee of the local cinema as George Bailey (James Stewart) ran through a snow-covered Bedford Falls, and back into the bosom of his family. It was also the picture that Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) took Kay Adams (Diane Keaton) to see at Radio City Music Hall on their first date. Aside from being dearly beloved by filmmakers named Francis, **The Bells of St Mary's** does what very few films have been able to do, and that is out-charm its cinematic predecessor (despite Bosley Crowther's 1946 claims in *The New York Times*).

Father 'Chuck' O'Malley (Bing Crosby) was first seen in Leo McCarey's 1944 hit *Going My Way* and is reintroduced here - wearing his straw boater on a jaunty angle - arriving at St. Mary's in order to help Sister Superior Mary Benedict (Ingrid Bergman). She, who is fighting to keep the Parochial school open and out of local businessman Horace P. Bogardus' hands. Bogardus (Henry Travers) has already purchased the adjacent building to St. Mary's but is determined to secure the school grounds for his parking lot.

In the beginning, Father and Sister clash – albeit with a twinkle of the eye and a sly smile on the face, alongside quips like: "Did anyone ever tell you, you have a dishonest face? For a Priest, I mean." Somewhat predictably, they - the American Priest and European Nun - realise they must come together to fight a common goal. Sound familiar? Okay, so it's not fascism per se but the film was released in December of 1945 so it's hardly a stretch to see its themes set against the war effort.

Father O'Malley tries his charm on Mr. Bogardus

Director McCarey had a somewhat varied career, dabbling in slapstick (*Duck Soup*, 1933), melodrama (*Make Way For Tomorrow*, 1937), screwball comedy (*The Awful Truth*, 1937) and romance (*An Affair to Remember*, 1957). He would make four Priest-led films (*Going My Way*, ...**St. Mary's**, *My Son John* in '53 and *The Devil Never Sleeps* in '62), which for a devout Catholic is hardly surprising, but in all and especially in this film he managed to humanise both Priests and Nuns, depicting them as flawed individuals and,

crooner Crosby and the radiant Bergman take Dudley Nicholls' script and run with it.

There are no villains of this piece – Travers best known for playing angel Clarence in Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* is probably the most antagonistic, however, manages to convey sincerity and humour all the while attempting to chuck the Sisters and their young wards out of their school. While this is the overarching plot, there are minor, almost irrelevant arcs which provide the gentle comedy and at times offer the most laughs, which go to the heart of the film and viewer alike. Like, flunking student Patsy Gallagher (Joan Carroll) who leans on Father Chuck to help her pass the school year.

Patsy is left at St. Mary's while her mother Mary (Martha Sleeper) weighs up giving caddish pianist Joe (William Gargan) - who left her pregnant and alone - another chance. Or, bullied Eddie Breen (Richard Tyler) who has been "turning the other cheek" as per Sister Superior's advice until she decides to teach him, in one memorable and hilarious scene, to box. Even when Chuck and Mary Benedict do have a difference of opinion, it is all decidedly good natured.

It is these threads, and elements within the mise-en-scène, which show the passing of time as the seasons change and the school year progresses, culminating in the most adorable Nativity performance, in the history of Nativities. McCarey was all about improvisation and naturalism in his actors' performances, and it is no more apparent than in the recreation of "Jesus's birthday". It was reportedly shot in just one take with the children encouraged to ignore the camera and crew, and approach their material as they saw fit.

This is an aspect of McCarey's work ethic which admirer Yasujir Ozu emulated in *Tokyo Story* - the 1953 retelling of *Make Way for Tomorrow*. It is a characteristic which makes this film so utterly charming. There are of course - given Crosby's presence - musical numbers, courtesy of composer Robert Emmett Dolan (sic), such as the delightful "Aren't You Glad You're You?" and even Bergman stretches her vocal cords in her native Swedish for "Varvindar Friska" (Spring Breezes) and while musicals are not everybody's cup of tea (I know, who doesn't love a bit of Bing?) there are ample numbers to enhance the narrative yet few enough not to put people off completely.

Drill deeper and there are interesting depictions of the gendered approach to conflict which one may argue are outdated, however, some still ring true even today. Yes, it may offer an idealised, even sweet depiction of Catholic schooling but this assertion of patriarchal power is more than still relative especially in the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed, as discussed by Revd Steve Nolan's analysis in the disc extras – the notion of paternalism. Made obvious in the way Dr. McKay (Rhys Williams) decides to withhold vital information of and from a (female) patient but discusses freely with 'a man of the cloth'.

Although not necessarily a Christmas film, you can do a whole lot worse than including this film on your festive watchlist (if not before). It's the perfect addition containing humour, charm and sincerity, and one which warms the cockles in much the same way as *The Shop Around the Corner* or *Remember the Night*. It may not be regarded as McCarey's most cinematically satisfying film but its popularity is evident and understandable.

The performances are natural, subtle and nuanced especially Bergman who was rarely seen onscreen less than glamorous, and was loaned by David O. Selznick as part of a deal he struck with McCarey. Here she shines, quite literally, from the glow of her unmade-up face to the luminosity of her smile and the clever use of lighting which flawlessly renders her, hitting the eyes perfectly within her wimple. Made all the more noticeable here thanks Paramount's restoration process which still contains some grain but which creates a beautiful monochromatic sheen to each frame, set within a 1:37:1 aspect ratio.

The Bells of St. Mary's will charm your socks off – and it's a well-known fact that this writer watches it every Christmas Eve without fail. It just ain't Noël without that little boy, Bobby (Dolan Jr), knocking on a curtain explaining in one breath, "This is Mary and I'm Joseph, and we came to Bethlehem to find a place to stay."

Special Features

It's almost a given now that if it's an Arrow Films release, the Academy label in this instance, there are always a few extras to enjoy after the credits have rolled… and only then.

Up to His Neck in Nuns (22 mins) – This visual essay by David Cairns is entertaining and informative as the writer dips into Leo McCarey's filmmaking history, his early life, Catholicism and heavy drinking. It switches from film clips, stills, photos, archival interview quotes, and Cairns' lovely Scottish lilt ensures it's never boring.

Analysing O'Malley (19:48) – This appreciation by the Chaplain of Princess Alice Hospice, film academic, and author of *Film, Lacan and the subject of Religions: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Religious Film Analysis*, Revd Dr. Steve Nolan is a little dry in comparison to the previous essay. Nolan sits to the right of the frame and narrates; reading an essay from an autocue. It's a fascinating analysis but one which would have worked just as well as a commentary (surprisingly lacking here).

You Can Change the World (32:07) – This short religious propaganda film was shot by Director McCarey in 1949 and features appearances by Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Irene Dunne, William Holden, Loretta Young, and Jack Benny - all regarded at the time as 'super Catholics'. It's arguably some of the best acting any of them have ever done, and they're playing themselves! It's preachy, condescending, cringeworthy hypocrisy at its finest (and I say this as a Catholic). The purpose of the film was to persuade "good, decent, normal people" to join The Christophers. I stopped

counting how often "The Declaration of Independence" is mentioned when I reached ten.

Two Screen Guild Theater Radio Adaptations: One from August 26th, 1946 (29:52) and the other recorded October 6th, 1947 (28:59). Both star Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman reprising their roles as Fr. Chuck O'Malley and Sister Superior Mary Benedict. The radio programmes are played over a slide show of film stills.

Musical Score Featurette produced by RKO Radio (22:28) – This was made to promote the film's original release in December 1945, and is played over the same film stills as the radio adaptations.

Theatrical Trailer (1:51) – A perfect way to compare the film against this trailer and see the amount of work that has gone into the restoration process.

Image Gallery – This is slideshow of 35 images. There are gorgeous chiaroscuro snaps, candids, as well as magazine covers, set images and colour posters.

First Pressing Only – Fully illustrated booklet containing new writing on the film by Ronald Bergen.

Reversible sleeve featuring original and newly commissioned artwork by Jennifer Dionisio.

Artwork by Jennifer Dionisio

Film: 8 out of 10	**Video:** 9 out of 10
Audio: 9 out of 10	**Extras:** 8 out of 10

Overall: An absolute delight which will charm your socks off. **8 out of 10**

Hel Harding-Jones

If Only...If Only

Martin McQuade has been doing some incredible research.

The "Unrealized Projects" section of *Bing Crosby in The Road to Hollywood* by Fred Reynolds (John Joyce and Son; 1986) lays the groundwork for tantalizing contemplation. Here are 52 possibilities that would have expanded Bing's screen persona. Here is the preface to this section.

During the long period of Bing Crosby's film career, it was inevitable that very many projects and proposals would never be fulfilled, For a variety of reasons scripts, books, plays which were offered or considered failed to proceed or were eventually produced by or with other people. Some of these properties with which Crosby was associated, or reported to have been, are shown in the list.

One could endlessly envision whether these diffuse endeavors would have been appropriate for an actor who had often succeeded in taking risks with challenging undertakings. Theatrical films such as *Sing*

A dramatic scene from Man on Fire

You Sinners, Going My Way, The Bells of St. Mary's, Little Boy Lost, The Country Girl, Man on Fire, and *Stagecoach*, as well as his made-for-television films *The Demon Under the Bed* and *Dr. Cook's Garden* come immediately to mind.

No wonder so many producers wanted to capitalize on Bing's dramatic range. Speculation upon these "might have been opportunities" increases by way of additional potentialities reproduced herein, albeit shortened, courtesy of the website *Crawley's Casting Calls*, "a unique directory of what you never saw on-screen, the films the stars did not make, the movies that never were."

- *Thanks a Million* with Dick Powell, 1934. Working title: *Sing, Governor, Sing*. First Bing, then Lawrence Tibbett was in line for the crooner part.
- *Swing High, Swing Low*, 1936. The first time Der Bingle was up for the same role as Gary Cooper. The second was *Friendly Persuasion*, 1956. Fred MacMurray ultimately got the part.
- *The Fleet's In*, 1941. Paramount first viewed the sailors-ashore comedy-musical as a Hope and Crosby vehicle. Instead, the suits decided to boost its new talent - William Holden, Dorothy Lamour, Betty Hutton and Eddie Bracken.
- *Happy Go Lucky*, 1942. The planned co-stars, Bing Crosby and singer-composer Edna Heard, became Dick Powell and Lillian Randolph. Not the only change. The first title was *Cupid with a Beard*.
- *True to Life*, 1943. The old firm of Crosby and Bob Hope were first due as radio writers trying to save their failing show. They churned into Powell and Franchot Tone.
- *Harvey*, 1949. Playwright Mary Chase had final

approval of the movie. Stewart and Joe E Brown were the only contenders who had played, on stage, Elwood P Dowd, an alcoholic who sees and relates to an invisible giant rabbit called Harvey. Other potential Elwoods were Crosby, Jack Benny, James Cagney, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Jack Haley, even crooner Rudy Vallee.

- *Le Petit Monde de Don Camillo/The Little World of Don Camillo,* France-Italy, 1952. Frank Capra saw journalist Giovanni Guareschi's 1940's book as a musical comedy for Der Bingle - aka the world's most famous movie priest. Fernandel's straight version launched a series of five films over the next 14 years.
- *Oh... Rosalinda!!*, 1955. Part of what UK director Michael Powell called his "Neverland cast." They met in Paris when The Old Groaner "would talk of nothing but golf." Mel Ferrer got the part.
- *The Pajama Game*, 1956. At Warner, it was Marlon Brando v Frank Sinatra for the lead in the musical about a pajama factory strike (!). Then, Crosby offered his services - but proved far too expensive. Enter: Broadway's Raitt. [See review "Doris Day: The Untold Story of the Girl Next Door" BING #167, p18]
- *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*, 1958. The half-Irish Walt Disney had been planning his dream film since the early 40s when he naturally, wanted Film City's resident leprechaun, Barry Fitzgerald, for both Darby and the little person King Brian of Knocknasheega... "No, no, I'm far too old," he claimed when 59 in '47. "OK," said Disney. "Just play the king and I'll get Bing for Darby." Albert Sharpe won the part.
- *Holiday for Lovers*, 1958. Fox was buying vehicles just for Clifton Webb - and if he said "No," they had Crosby as First Reserve for the psychologist father taking his teenage daughters on vacation in South America. Bing's boy, Gary, was cast as Carol Lynley's USAF guy.
- *Who Was That Lady?*, 1959. Old mates Crosby and Bob Hope saw the comedy as a kind of Road to Quantico as Bing helps Bob concoct a story that he's an FBI agent and the girl that his wife saw him kissing was... a Russian spy!
- *The Sound of Music*, 1964. First choice Crosby (oldest choice at 61), Richard Burton, Yul Brynner, Sean Connery, Peter Finch, Walter Matthau, Keith Michel and Maximilian Schell lost the part of Captain Von Trapp to Christopher Plummer. Keith Michel was first reserve if Plummer proved unavailable. [According to an article, "The Real *Sound of Music*" by Tara Brady (*The Irish Times*; June 9, 2018), "Julie Andrews was screenwriter Ernest Lehman's first choice. But 20th Century Fox was less interested and suggested Doris Day, Leslie Caron, Grace Kelly and Anne Bancroft to play opposite Bing Crosby." An article by Roger Lewis entitled "A Brief Guide to *The Sound of Music*: How The Osmonds, Audrey Hepburn and Bing Crosby Could Have Been the Film's Stars" (*Mail Online*; March 26, 2015) sheds further light. "Rex Harrison, Bing Crosby and Yul Brynner turned down the role of Captain Von Trapp, believing the man to be 'very much a cardboard figure, humorless and one-dimensional.'" [*The Making of The Sound of Music* by Max Wilk (Routledge; 2007) provides this recollection from script supervisor Saul Chaplin. "Bing was the studio's suggestion, which we never took seriously because we never considered him right for the part."]
- *Doctor Dolittle*, 1967. The producers plainly had no idea for Dolittle's pal, Matthew Mugg... going from Danny Kaye and David Wayne in their mid-50s to Bing Crosby at age 64. "Must go younger," said producer Arthur P Jacobs. But who? He didn't have to look far. The great Anthony Newley, 36, had already helped out on the music with his usual composing partner Leslie Bricusse.
- Peter Falk, *Columbo*, 1971.Thomas Mitchell had been heading to Broadway as Lieutenant Columbo when he died in 1962, Bing turned down the first *Columbo* tele-movie in the Universal Mystery Movie series for NBC, (playing golf) "So," said Falk, "it's because of golf that I'm here."

These entries augment Reynolds' roster, which appears below with references to his exhaustive research. The bracketed information contains information culled from Crawley's site and my own research. There are also occasional references to my articles expanding upon these prospects.

- *Alice in Wonderland*, 1933; in role of The Mock Turtle
- *Vienna Nightingale*, 1935; planned operetta; Paramount purchased this property after Bing sang an operatic solo on the radio; Bing thought his voice was unsuitable for opera
- *Fly by Night*,1936; a planned murder mystery with songs
- *The Story of Will Rogers*, 1944; Bing made a screen test; made with Will Rogers, Jr.in 1952 [Joel McCrea declined, reportedly stating, "I'm not qualified."]
- *Comin' through The Rye*, 1946; the life of Robert Burns
- *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, 1946; life of folk singer John Avery Lomax) [See "Adventures of a Ballad Hunter," BING #146, p31]
- *Road to Brooklyn*, 1946; with Hope and Lamour
- Untitled Film, 1947; to be produced by Alexander Korda, scripted by Damon Runyon in England
- *Friendly Persuasion*, 1948; scheduled to be Frank Capra's first Paramount film, planned for Bing and Jean Arthur; Capra wouldn't accept one and a half million dollar budget that Paramount president

Barney Balaban had offered [Capra later sold the project to William Wyler.]

- *The Silver Whistle*, 1949; part originated on Broadway by Jose Ferrer
- *Pardners*, 1950; with Hopalong Cassidy, remake of *Rhythm On The Range*, eventually filmed with Martin and Lewis [See "Hopalong Cassidy on the Page, On the Screen," BING #154, p23]

Bing and Hoppy clown on a Chesterfield show

- *Road to Paris*, 1950; with Hope and Lamour
- *Come Back Little Sheba*, 1952; the role went to Burt Lancaster
- *Guys and Dolls*, 1952; with Bob Hope [Bing had his attorney plead his case to producer Sam Goldwyn.]
- *Road to the Moon*, 1953; with possibly Marilyn Monroe taking Lamour part
- *The Rainmaker*, 1955 [Producer Hal Wallis gave thought to Bing's request, then approached William Holden, before casting Burt Lancaster.]
- Untitled film 1957; with Jackie Gleason about songwriters Dubin and Warren.
- *The Music Man*, 1958; [Bing got interested after seeing the play; Jack Warner wanted Sinatra; Cary Grant vied for the part that went to Robert Preston]
- *Two for the Seesaw*, 1958; Bing became interested after seeing the stage play but the leading part went to Robert Mitchum.
- *Bachelor's Baby*, 1959; Fox project to be produced by Dick Powell [This may have evolved into *Bachelor Flat*, 1961]
- *The Jimmy Durante Story*, 1959; with Dean Martin playing Durante and Frank Sinatra playing Lou Clayton; Bing was to portray Eddie Jackson; Frank Capra was to direct and produce; Columbia earmarked a 5 million dollar budget; the plan fell apart when Capra became displeased with contractual arrangements; the Writers' Guild strike added to the complications [According to *Jimmy Durante: His Show Business Career* by Gene Bakish (McFarland; 1995) the three stars "were interested in making a movie…Capra turned in a script he had written to Columbia Pictures for planned 1959-60 release. A biographer of Capra says the three stars lost interest and that the script was a 'formless and bathetic treatment' of Gene Fowler's *Schnozola*." According to *The Frank Sinatra Film Guide*, by Daniel O'Brien (B.T. Batsford Ltd; 1999), all three stars participated through their own production companies. "Capra saw the dream rapidly fall as his stars demanded equal pay, without a corresponding investment of capitol. Once the director had bowed out, the film faded away."]

With Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore (centre) on a 1940s radio show

- *The Brothers Grimm*, 1960; Bing asked to play whichever brother he wanted.
- *The Great Western Story*, 1960; Cinerama would produce, along with Bing Crosby productions, which owned the rights; eventually became *How the West was Won* [Bing was first choice to narrate, a task that eventually fell to Spencer Tracy. See Review of *Spencer Tracy: A Biography*, BING #160, p19 and "Bingerama," Bing #165, p18]
- *Tender Is the Night*, 1960; Bing considered for part which went to Jason Robards, Jr.
- *Advise and Consent*, 1961; Otto Preminger wanted Bing, who was at the time committed to *The Road to Hong Kong*.
- *The Art of Llewellyn Jones*, 1961

- *By the Beautiful Sea*, 1961; A proposal for Bing and Judy Garland [According to *Charles Walters; The Director Who Made America Dance* by Brent Phillips (University Press of Kentucky; 2017) the director, who choreographed the 1954 Broadway musical by Fields and Schwartz, indicated that his "dream project" would be a screen version with the two stars]. Garland scholar John Fricke recently shared information regarding this project. "Roger Edens, so pivotal in Judy's career, and director Charles Walters worked like crazy to get the Dorothy Fields/ Arthur Schwartz musical *By the Beautiful Sea* done for them. In early August 1962, Edens had gone over to London where Judy had just finished *I Could Go On Singing*. They had dinner together. He wrote to Peter Shaw, then an MGM executive, saying how wonderful Judy looked and how much weight she had lost. He really thought that Charles Walters and he could get her through a picture. The desire was there. The planets just didn't align."
- John Fricke also informs that Bing was rumored as Judy Garland's co-star in *Annie Get Your Gun* at MGM in 1949
- *The Devil's Advocate*, 1962; Dore Schary wanted Bing to play the lead in the film of Morris West's book for Warner Bros. with Fredric March and Sophia Loren; Henry King would direct [Kathryn Crosby once recalled to me her memories of Bing preparing for the role by reading the novel at this time.] A press release from 1963 states, "Bing Crosby has been signed to play a priest in *The Devil's Advocate*. The picture is expected to start this summer with filming in Hollywood and Italy." One may glimpse this at https://picclick.com/1963-Press-Photo-Singer-Bing-Crosby-to-Play-372692860408.html#&gid=1&pid=2]
- *Road to Calcutta*, 1962
- *All the Way Home*, 1962; producer David Susskind wanted Bing; part went again to Robert Preston; about childhood of critic -and Bing fan - James Agee
- *Never Too Late*, 1962; Bing attempted to buy the rights to play and would have played Paul Ford part.
- Untitled film 1963; with Lucille Ball
- Musical version of *The Rainmaker*, 1963 [This project may have been a film version of *110 in the Shade*.]
- *Here's Love*, 1963; film version of Meredith Wilson musical
- *Choice of Violence*, 1963; a murder melodrama
- *Popi*, 1965; part went to Alan Arkin
- *Say It with Music*, 1965; with Julie Andrews with Irving Berlin score [See "To Say - or Not to Say It - with Music," BING #182, 26]
- *Bloomer Girl*, 1966; with Katharine Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine, based on the Arlen and Mercer musical
- *The Absence of a Cello*, 1966; musical with Vivien Leigh
- *Rocket to the Moon*, 1966; Bing to play P.T. Barnum in Jules Verne story; Burl Ives took the part
- *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, 1966
- *The Family Band*, 1966; part went to Walter Brennan [Disney had personally approved Bing, but his demand for a percentage of the profits was prohibitive. The eventual title was *The One and Only, Genuine, Original Family Band*. This reporter recalls anxiously following in the press the on-again, off-again negotiations throughout 1967.]
- *The Great St. Bernard*, 1967; a story about a monk in the Alps
- Untitled film with Fred Astaire; 1967
- *The Detective*, 1967; with Frank Sinatra
- *Road to Christmas*, 1968
- *Paint Your Wagon*, 1968; part went to Lee Marvin [See Robert Bader's liner notes for *Paint Your Wagon* medley, which accompanies the 2017 Bing Crosby Enterprises CD release, *Among My Souvenirs*.]
- *Spofford*, 1968; film of play
- *The Birds Wore Blinkers*, 1969; with Hope, Jackie Gleason and John Wayne; to be made in Ireland
- *The Sunshine Boys*, 1973; with Hope; parts went to George Burns and Walter Matthau
- *Road to Tomorrow*, 1975; with Hope; they would play widowed grandfathers; Lamour would co-star
- *The Road to the Fountain of Youth*, 1977; with Lamour, Hope and Mae West [According to website *Cinelinx*, "The story would begin with the aged Hope and Crosby as the main characters, until they find the fountain of youth and become young again after which younger actors would play the same characters as young men."]

Neither list mentions that Fox chief Darryl Zanuck intended Bing for *Can Can*, as chronicled in "Fleeting Glances," BING #181, p31. Further research has yielded fascinating additions culled from "The Films That Got Away" section at the website, *The Judy Room*.

- A film biography with Bing and Judy Garland of lyricist/producer Buddy DeSylva
- A plan for a Paramount western musical, with Garland and Hopalong Cassidy; possibly different from the aforementioned *Pardners*
- *Manhattan Tower*, circa 1956; possibly at Paramount; based on Gordon Jenkins' concept album, with Bing, Hope and Garland

All told, 72 varied and diverse projects demonstrate the demand for Bing throughout his illustrious film career. There is much additional information to uncover about these listings. There may be more titles to discover. We are left to ponder, "If only…if only."

Martin McQuade

(Editor: Many thanks, Martin, It's an amazing list and just imagine Bing in "The Sound of Music" and "Paint Your Wagon" to name but two!)

One Sweet Letter from You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue.

Ron Field, *by email from Morton, Washington, USA*

Ploughing through the latest issue and format and enjoying same. The article by John Bassett had me recalling that back in 1979 or 1981 when travelling across the USA in. Greyhound Bus. Got to somewhere in the mid-west I had a several hour wait for a continuing bus. So, what did I do? I jumped on a local bus and finished at a shopping mall and visited a record store.

That was a good move as I picked up a 2-record LP set of Bing's earliest recordings - the cover is a brownish-beige one. Included in the songs is 'Sweet Sue' and the note says that this record (78rpm) laid on a shelf for 40 years collecting dust. I even think Bing said he didn't recall recording it. The song is quite good. Amazing that it was discovered, unharmed, after all those years at RCA Camden. I returned to the Greyhound depot and continued on my merry way with my latest Bing LP.

(Editor: Bing recorded "Sweet Sue" on October 25, 1932 with just Lennie Hayton on piano accompanying him. It was an impromptu recording as it had been originally scheduled, with two other pieces, as a piano solo for Hayton. The recording was discovered as a test pressing in 1961 and was eventually released in 1968 on the 2-LP set "The Bing Crosby Story, Vol. 1 (The Early Jazz Years). There never was a Vol. 2.)

Frans van der Kolff, *by email from Apeldoorn, The Netherlands*

Yesterday I finished reading the new issue of BING magazine. I would like to compliment you on yet another excellent issue. Isn't it amazing that 43 years after Bing's death there's still so much to write about, and with that I don't mean 'just reminiscing about old times' but the things that are taking place in the here and now, like those recent new discoveries, the biography, Bing at Christmas and more.

I regularly search YouTube for new Crosby uploads and it strikes me that not only every day Crosby recordings are uploaded, but many are the days that these uploads amount to more Crosby material than you can play in one day. While we may be sorry that not everything we wish gets a re-release on DVD, Blu-ray, CD or vinyl, YouTube is a release channel that offers more material than one could wish for. I'm only talking about YouTube here; there are so many more sources to be found on the Internet. I guess the outlet of Bing recordings is nowadays greater than it has ever been in history.

I found the idea you proposed, for Decca to give the London Symphony Orchestra treatment to Bing's hits of the 40's and 50's a fascinating idea. Money and technical possibilities permitting, it would be great if such a project could be expanded to the thirties as well. It would be a great opportunity for new listeners to get to know Bing's 'young' voice. While some fans and collectors consider such projects more or less like 'sacrilege', I see them more in the light of a tribute - what really is the difference between an artist recreating Bing's original recordings with a twist of their own (a 'cover') and technicians recreating Bing's original recordings with a more up-to-date sound?

And anyway, what then are collectors and fans doing in the privacy of their homes, when they clean up and adjust recording levels and bias when recording their old recordings to a digital format? In other words: Remastering Bing's recordings? Just some thoughts ...

I have not had much contact with Wig Wiggins in the past. Reading about all the things he has done for the world of Crosbyana, some of which I wasn't even aware of, made me realize once more how valuable he was for our community. A great loss. May he rest in peace.

I loved the many reports on 'Bing at Christmas'. How special it is to have this kind of publicity at this time and age for Bing!

I do hope Gary Giddins' biography sells well. If it were up to the prizes and recognition he has got for his work, a Volume 3 surely would be in the pocket already.

Reading the report of the get-togethers at Jason Liddiard's in Warrington reminded me about the pleasant little get-togethers we had in The Netherlands many years ago. I noticed an old-time member returning to the ICC after many years: Philippe Peerboom. I just might try to get in touch with Philippe again. Michael Crampton may be surprised to see his listing of 'new members' can also be used as a source of getting re-acquainted!

No doubt you will receive many comments regarding Mike Kaptanis considering Perry Como as 'not an exciting singer'. The thing that excited me about Perry Como when I first heard his recordings, was what obviously Mike Kaptanis does not seem to appreciate: Como's excellence on the areas of breath and tone control and his often more than outstanding delivery of a song. As you say though, we're all entitled to an opinion and I found the rest of Mr. Kaptanis' article both entertaining and interesting.

There's so much more I could comment on in this issue ... I liked John Bassett's and Ken Crossland's views, the article on Bing and Judy ... But I should not shine my light on everything in the magazine; don't want to get in the way of your preparations for the new issue!

Bert Hamblet, *West Kirby, Merseyside, UK*

First congratulations on the high standard of the Crosby magazine. If Bing was around now he would be very impressed with your magazine.

I watch a TV channel called "Talking Pictures" which shows a lot of films of the 1940/50s. It's a pleasure to watch a film on this channel and understand what the characters are saying. Anyway, on 14 February they showed a 10-minute film clip of Bing Crosby songs featuring the King Sisters and a chap called Gene Morgan playing the piano. The King Sisters were very good and they sang:
One, Two, Button Your shoe
Pennies from Heaven
Love in Bloom
I'm an Old Cowhand
Blue Hawaii.
I wasn't impressed with Gene Morgan.

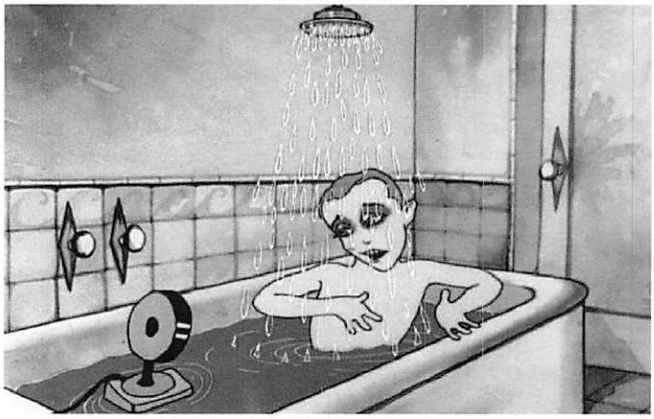
On to a different matter, I bought a CD of music by various people playing the piano. One of the tracks was by Diana Lynn and boy could she play! Diana spent a few years 1940 to 1954 making films at Paramount. She appeared in *Star-Spangled Rhythm*, *Duffy's Tavern*, and *Variety Girl* – all Bing films. I was wondering if she ever appeared on Bing's radio programme playing the piano? She died in 1971 at the age of 45 from a brain haemorrhage. Her most famous film was in 1951, *Bedtime for Bonzo* with Ronald Reagan.

(Editor: Yes, Diana Lynn did indeed appear on the Kraft Music Hall hosted by Bing on December 7, 1944 and she played "The Warsaw Concerto". Regarding The King Sisters clip this was shown again on the Talking Pictures channel on April 20. It was titled "Crosby Favorites" and it was made in 1939 and released by Official Films. It was intended as a sing-along film with the lyrics appearing on the screen as it was shown in-between feature films at the cinema. It can also be found on the Internet at https://vimeo.com/272292885)

Bert Bishop, *by email from Chelmsford, Essex, UK*

I may have mentioned this black and white 1933 *Merrie Melodies* cartoon to you before. Or you may have heard of it elsewhere. But it cropped up on a Busby Berkeley film extras DVD I was watching and it amused me. The title of the cartoon is *I've Got to Sing a Torch Song* and it features a number of film stars of that era as cartoon characters.

Halfway through we see a dressing room door that says Cros Bingsby Private. Inside 'Bing' is in the bath covered in soap bubbles singing "Why Can't This Go on Forever?" [I think]. He switches on an overhead shower which washes off all the suds and we see a creditable image of Bing. I hope it's of some interest even if you know of it already!



In another *Merrie Melodies: I Only Have Eyes for You*, Bing's 'photograph' (along with Rudy Vallee's)is seen on the wall of the home of a radio crooner fan and a Crosby type voice is heard briefly singing "Let It Be Me".

Editor: Many thanks, Bert. The "I've Got to Sing a Torch Song" cartoon can also be found on YouTube. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wea0ssrgk3A while I Only Have Eyes for You can be viewed at

https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4pkhf6

Keith Parkinson, *by email from Eccleston, St. Helens, Lancashire, UK*

The Philco CDs have filled many listening hours over the last few weeks. Around half the songs are new to me on CD. If sales are good I hope Sepia consider a volume 2. They issued two Jolson sets over the last year so they seem to be happy to cater to a niche market. My first purchase of Philco recordings must have been about fifty years ago when I bought the LP "Bing's All Star Philco Show" from the ICC. The sound was distinctly lo-fi but who cared back then. The content was sourced from Bob Roberts' collection and the sleeve was printed in Grange-over-Sands. It was John Joyce who began to provide quality listening product some ten years later.

I've been listening to some seldom played Bing CDs recently. I usually re-read the liner notes and this is what Joe Bushkin writes on the 1995 issue of the DRG CD of his "Road to Oslo" album: "We decided to record with Bing and the rhythm section in the afternoons prior to our engagement at the Palladium in September. The Palladium had never allowed anyone to record there other than live, in concert, and the managing director insisted we do it at a studio. I told him that Mr. Crosby might be upset knowing that after the session we had to move the Bechstein I was using back to the Palladium and have it tuned again in time for the 7:30 performance." We know that Bing's final Palladium season was from September 26th to October 8th 1977 and that the two songs Bing re-recorded from the Oslo concert were "Now You Has Jazz" and "Sail Away from Norway". Your "Day by Day" book details a 4th October recording date at Olympic Studios, London with the involvement of Jack Parnell's Orchestra. It's a trivial issue but my money is on Olympic Studios. I guess Bushkin's memory failed him some twenty years after the event.

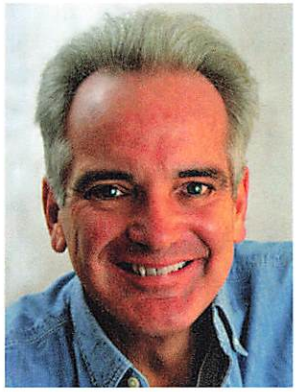
(Editor: Well, it looks Joe Bushkin's assertion may be correct because the updated version of my Day by Day book on the BING magazine web site now has the following entry:

October 4, Tuesday. Bing had specially recorded "Now You Has Jazz" and "Sail Away from Norway" with the Joe Bushkin Quartet on the Palladium stage in previous days and the songs are mastered with backing from Jack Parnell and his Orchestra at Olympic Studios, London. These are his last commercial recordings. Goes on to perform at the London Palladium at night.

So I must have updated the information at some stage. Can anyone add any further background?)

Bing 'n' Connie That's A-Plenty for Me!

Jeremy Rose looks at one of Bing's favourite duet partners.



For Ella Fitzgerald she was an idol. "My mother brought home one of her records, and I fell in love with it... I tried so hard to sound just like her." Harry Belafonte once said of her that she was, "...the most widely imitated singer of all time...", and for the UK-based musicologist and writer Laurie Stras, she is, "...a key figure in the development of the voice as a carrier for jazz."

Constance Foore Boswell was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on December 3rd 1907, the middle sister of the trio, Martha, Connie and Helvetia (Vet), who would later find fame as The Boswell Sisters. The family was raised in New Orleans, where all three girls received a sound "classical" musical education, with Connie taking up the 'cello as her main instrument. Although, as Will Friedwald states in his book, *Jazz Singing*, "...we don't know how much Negro jazz a middle-class white girl would have been able to hear...", there can surely be no question that their surroundings had a profound influence on their musical development.

While still in their early teens, the trio became well known in New Orleans, performing a mix of classical, light classical and jazz-influenced repertoire in vaudeville theatres and on local radio stations. As their interest in jazz developed, however, the classical side receded into the background and they concentrated more and more on reworking melodies in an improvisational style, both vocally and instrumentally.

A tour with a vaudeville company landed them in Los Angeles in October 1929 and they settled in for the duration, making radio appearances and several recordings for OKeh Records. The sisters' new and unusual arranging and singing styles polarised opinion, however, as shown by one letter from an outraged listener to a radio station, pleading, "Please get those terrible Boswell Sisters off the station. You can't follow the melody and the beat is going too rapidly. And to me they sound like savage chanters!"

The sisters relocated to New York in 1930, and it is at this point that their fortunes take a turn for the better and also begin to converge with those of a certain up-and-coming young crooner.

They began to make national radio broadcasts, having their own series on CBS from 1931-1933. More significantly, they signed a recording contract with Brunswick Records under the aegis of producer Jack Kapp. These 1931-1935 Brunswick recordings are widely considered to be milestones in the history of vocal jazz. As Laurie Stras says in her 2009 book, *Sing a Song of Difference*, "...the Boswells took greater liberties, regularly changing styles, tempi, modality, lyrics, time signatures and voicing (both instrumental and vocal) to create unexpected textures and effects."

Bing appears on only two of the New York Brunswick releases with the sisters - Gems from *George White's Scandals* from October 25th, 1931 and *Lawd You Made the Night Too Long* from April 13th, 1932. Although Bing features on the recordings, he doesn't actually sing with the sisters, so we are not given the opportunity to see how they might have interacted vocally. (They did appear together many times on radio, however, and there is a tantalisingly brief extract from *St. Louis Blues* on the ICC 2008 CD release *Bing Crosby Entertains for Woodbury Soap*.)

By the time of the Brunswick contract, Connie's was very much the dominant voice in the sisters' vocal mix and Jack Kapp brought her to the fore as a solo artist right from the start of their time with the label. He insisted, however, that these solo forays should be of more middle-of-the-road material, without the jazz embellishments which he believed would deter sales. His oft-repeated motto was, "Where's the melody?"..!

Kapp and Connie clashed over her solo recording of *Martha*. Backed by Bob Crosby and The Bobcats, it was a swinging arrangement of a well-known aria from an opera of the same name by the 19th century German composer Friedrich von Flotow. When he heard the playback, Kapp was livid - he had presumably been expecting a respectful ballad-like treatment. He refused to issue the recording, only relenting when Connie offered to take full-page ads in *Variety* absolving the company of all blame if the record failed to make a certain level of sales. *Martha* was duly released and, as Connie later said, "I didn't need to place the ads!"

In 1936, the trio signed to Decca Records, but after just three releases, Martha and Vet left the act in order to marry and devote themselves to family life, so Connie continued her career as a solo artist.

Between 1937 and 1952, Bing and Connie recorded ten sides together.

Their first studio session was in Los Angeles on 25th September 1937, recording *Basin Street Blues* and *Bob White (Watcha Gonna Swing Tonight?)* with John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra. On *Basin Street Blues*, Bing basically provides a vocal accompaniment to Connie's superb rendition of this Spencer Williams blues classic. After an introduction from trombonist Abe Lincoln, Connie sings the verse, interspersed with spoken patter with Bing during which they refer to each other by name and name-check John Scott Trotter! Connie then takes the first chorus, with Bing interpolating a sort of scat obbligato to his partner's vocals. An instrumental second chorus gives trumpet-player Andy Secrest a chance to shine. The coda - effectively a repeat of the verse - sees Bing singing his only two solo lines of the side, before harmonising with Connie to round off proceedings.

After years of listening to this next track and wondering who "Bob White" was - and obviously not listening closely enough to the lyrics - I finally discovered that it is actually a *bird* that Bing and Connie are singing about in this number by Bernie Hanighen and Johnny Mercer! Bing and Connie share the vocal honours on this one, batting their lines backwards and forwards to each other with complete vocal and rhythmic control. It's a joy to listen to. We even get some whistling from Bing! There are fine contributions once again from Messrs Secrest and Lincoln in the instrumental second chorus. This release reached the number one spot in the Decca charts, the first of only two number one hits enjoyed by Connie. (For the second, see below..!)

On 26th January 1938 Bing, Connie and Eddie Cantor went into the studio to record Irving's Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band*. Cantor's contribution was to provide a spoken introduction announcing that the proceeds from the recording would be donated to the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, of which he and Boswell were two of the founder members. The recording basically consists of four up-tempo choruses of the song from the Victor Young orchestra, with Bing and Connie taking a vocal lead in the third chorus. They also contribute two-bar vocal interjections in the final chorus, very much in the staccato style of their recent *Bob White* session. The whole thing swings along nicely - if a little relentlessly! The record reached the number one spot in the Decca chart.

The "B" side can very much be seen as a "filler", consisting of Bing and Connie singing completely separate excerpts from songs they had previously recorded in full - *Home on the Range* and *True Confession* respectively.

We now move forward in time to June 22nd 1939, and Bing and Connie are back in the studio in Los Angeles for their first collaboration in more than a year. *Start the Day Right* is a pleasant enough little number by Charles Tobias, Al Lewis and Maurice Spitalny. The three-four tempo sees Bing and Connie alternating sung or spoken solo lines, only joining forces on the last phrase of each chorus - either sung or whistled! This pattern continues when the tempo changes to duple time at the middle-eight of the second chorus, giving them more space to riff their way through to the end of the number. *An Apple for the Teacher* was written by Johnny Burke and Jimmy Monaco for Bing's 1939 Paramount film *The Star Maker* and this catchy up-tempo number provides an ideal framework for Bing and Connie's vocal repartée. After taking alternate lines in the short verse, they take a solo chorus apiece before swinging into a shared final chorus, finishing with a harmonised coda. John Scott Trotter provides a discreet, swing arrangement which perfectly suits the material. Although not quite repeating the success of their releases the previous year, this track nevertheless reached the number two spot during a fourteen-week spell in the charts.

Between 18th and 19th on Chestnut Street was the only Bing/Connie duet recorded at the Los Angeles session of December 15th, 1939. The somewhat unusual structure of the song, with its 12-bar bridge section and - to my ears at least - the rather restrained arrangement, make this a tricky one to pull off, but Bing and Connie display their usual dexterity - alternating vocal lines, harmonising with rhythmic precision and batting ad-libs back and forth with aplomb. Unfortunately, the song only managed to reach number 15 in the charts.

Almost exactly a year later, on December 13th 1940, Bing and Connie were back in the Los Angeles studio with Bob Crosby and his Bobcats to record *Tea for Two* and *Yes Indeed. Tea for Two* is an ever-so-slightly lacklustre, gently laid-back saunter through this famous Irving Caesar/Vincent Youmans number from "No, No, Nanette". It's basically twice-through-the-refrain, with Bing and Connie harmonising together throughout the first, with Bing taking the melody and Connie sounding slightly uncomfortable with the lower harmony in the chosen key. There's a downward key-change for the second refrain, and now it's Bing's turn to sound slightly uncomfortable. Connie is basically singing in the same register but now alternating the melody with Bing. There are a few brief syncopated riffs towards the end, but it's not enough to save this misjudged effort. It did not make the charts.

Things improve somewhat for *Yes, Indeed*, an *ersatz* Southern-style number written for bandleader Tommy Dorsey by Sy Oliver. The disc opens with some spoken repartée between Bing and Connie which, according to Gary Giddins, demonstrates Bing's affection for, "... the *dese, dose, yowsuh, yuk-yuk* relics of southernness ritualized in minstrelsy." Bing and Connie are both on great bluesy form, though, and seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves as they bounce ad-libs and riff their way through, supported by a great foot-tapping arrangement from the Bob-Cats. This, alas, was Bing and Connie's final studio session together, but some twelve years later there was one more commercial release to come.

That's A-Plenty was recorded on September 2nd 1952 for broadcast on Bing's General Electric show of November 27th of that year. For my money it's the best thing they ever committed to disc. They are both completely at home in the up-tempo New Orleans idiom of this number, written in 1914 by the 19-year old Lew Pollack and here given a fizzing arrangement by John Scott Trotter. Bing and Connie's rhythmic control and their innate sense of where to place the beat - particularly in the even quicker refrain following the amazing instrumental release - make me grin with delight every time I hear it.

Like the song says, "The Dixieland comes oozin' out of it..!"

For this writer at least, the best of these sides represent some of the most musically satisfying duet outings of Bing's career and I think it's a great pity that they didn't record together more often. He and Connie seem to have the same musical instincts, firmly rooted in the cusp of the jazz and swing eras of the late '20s and early '30s and drawing on the best of both those musical worlds. He also relishes the slurred Southern inflections of Connie's delivery and joins in seamlessly, surely relishing, as Giddins says, the recollections of the minstrel shows of his youth.

They had plenty of opportunity to hone their working relationship during Connie's stint as resident female vocalist on the weekly Kraft Music Hall broadcasts between 11th November 1940 and December 25th 1941. Some of these shows are still available online, and although the exchanges between Bing, Connie and Bob Burns can sound singularly leaden to modern ears, Bing and Connie obviously have a very easy rapport and there are some great duets to be heard! Connie was replaced for the 1942 season by Mary Martin. The sponsors apparently promoted the notion that Connie's hectic touring schedule away from KMH had necessitated the change, but in an interview in

Bing and Connie on a Kraft show

Variety on 18th March 1942, Connie retorted, "I don't know why they put out such stuff. To put it plainly, I was fired. They wanted Mary Martin in my place, so they hired her." She appeared on the bill with Bing on three *Command Performance* broadcasts during 1942, guested on the Philco show of 4th June 1947 (although they didn't sing together) and then again on the General Electric show broadcast on 27th November 1952 which produced *That's A-Plenty*.

Throughout her life, Connie Boswell was confined to a wheelchair, having been virtually completely paralysed from the waist down following an attack of poliomyelitis at the age of three. Whilst on stage she concealed her wheelchair beneath the draperies of her gowns. Although she made several film appearances (including appearing with her sisters in *The Big Broadcast* in 1932) her disability precluded the possibility of her completely making the transition from the recording studio to the movie studio in the way someone like Doris Day had. During WWll she was denied permission to travel overseas to entertain the troops because it was felt that an entertainer in a wheelchair would be bad for troop morale. We can only wonder at how that made her feel, but as Gary Giddins says of her, "She disdained sympathy".

At some point during the 1940s she started signing her name "Connee" Boswell. I have found various anecdotal reasons for this change, including one from Boswell herself who tells of having received a particularly effusive and complimentary letter from a fan who then proceeds to spell her name incorrectly. She liked the look of the incorrect spelling and adopted it. I think it's more likely, however, that Gary Giddins is again correct when he says that she changed her name during the war, "...so she would not have to dot the i while signing countless autographs for servicemen."

She continued recording until the late '50s and I think it's one of her later projects which gives modern ears a clearer understanding of her influence on the generation of vocalists who followed her. On her 1957 album *Connee Boswell and the Original Memphis Five in Hi-Fi*, she selected and arranged a series of jazz standards to be shared between vocal and purely instrumental tracks. In vocal numbers such as *When My Sugar Walks Down the Street, Say It Isn't So, Japanese Sandman, All of Me or Make Love to Me* (all available on YouTube), you can clearly hear the influences she had on any number of singers, from Ella Fitzgerald through to Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan and Della Reese.

In early 1976, Connie was admitted to Mt. Sinai hospital for the removal of a stomach tumour. On 13th February of that year, Bing wrote to her, wishing her well and adding a few lines of chit-chat about his work, the family, etc. He closed with the words, "I'll say a prayer for you, Constance. Stay in there and keep pitchin'. Always your buddy, Bing." Sadly, she couldn't keep pitchin' and died a few months later, on the 11th October. Bing remembered her as, "a dear woman, a brave woman", but let's leave the final word to the singer who most readily acknowledged her debt to Boswell's unique talent.

"There was only one singer who influenced me. I tried to sing like her all the time, because everything she did made sense musically, and that singer was Connie Boswell. When I was a girl, I listened to records by all the singers, black and white, and I know Connie was doing things that no-one else was doing at the time. You don't have to take my word for it; just check the recordings made at the time and hear for yourself" – Ella Fitzgerald

Jeremy Rose

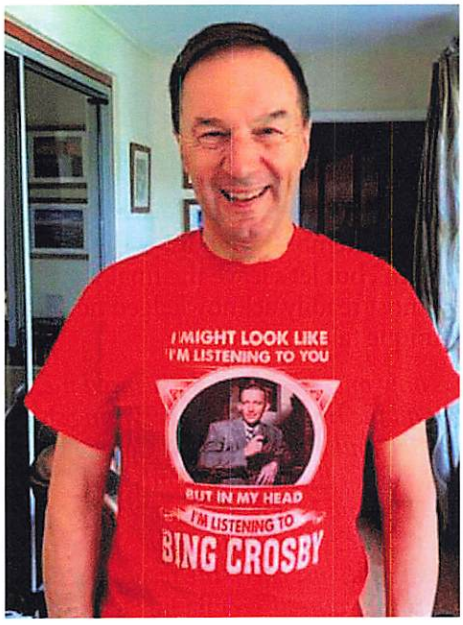
Crosbyana

Ken Crossland outlines his lockdown experience.

Bing - A Voice for All Seasons was the title of perhaps one of the forgotten books of Crosbyana. Written by Sheldon O'Connell with Gord Atkinson, it was the book's title that brought it back to my attention. Who would have thought that the "all seasons" would include a global pandemic with most of us enduring - maybe even enjoying - a period of enforced lockdown.

I realised that Bing was a singer for the lockdown, as much as any other season when a member of an online music group that I subscribe to, posted the question as to what might be the most appropriate song for the lockdown experience. My thoughts immediately went to "What Do I Care, It's Home" and "Let's Spend an Evening at Home" as tied for first place. I also found a song that might be the least appropriate - "Let's All Meet at My House", an obscure recording that Bing made in July 1941 with the Woody Herman Orchestra, and billed as a duet between Bing and Muriel Lane. Who? You might well ask. Bing did. Sometime in the 70s, one of the US TV talk shows decided to put him on the spot and see how many of his records he could remember. When it came to "Let's All Meet at My House", Bing not only failed to remember the song but insisted "I've never heard of Muriel Lane". She was one of Herman's cadre of singers, and makes a brief appearance on the disc, as does Herman himself, although only Miss Lane gets the privilege of being billed as a Crosby duettist.

Apart from challenges such as this, what else did lockdown contribute to my Crosby experience? Well with the days long, the golf course closed and nowhere to go but the garden, it seemed time to dwell a little longer over my morning coffee and I came up with something that has since become part of my daily routine. I look for one Crosby recording and one piece of video - from film or TV - which I sit and enjoy - and



Ken in lockdown

really focus on - to the exclusion of everything else. It only takes around 7-10 minutes but I have found it to be a most rewarding exercise.

The question everybody asks is how do you pick the songs? Well, just an exercise in serendipity really, the choices usually prompted by a chance thought or idea that wanders into my brain the day before. My first two were predictable favourites of mine - "She Reminds Me of You", a wonderful recording from 1934, with a fabulous soaring finish from Bing, although it was a memory of the delightful way this song played out in the movie, *We're Not Dressing*, where Bing sang the song to the ship's bear, that brought it to mind. I love the story that Bing told about Carole Lombard, his co-star, and her sense of humour. Apparently the bear drove the director, Norman Taurog, to distraction, much to the amusement of the cast. When the shooting was done, Lombard bought the bear and chained it to Taurog's front porch!

From there, I moved on to "Cabin in the Pines", another delightful example of the unfettered, early Crosby, before a chance discovery took me way up to the 1970s. What new song from that decade was recorded by Bing, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Dean Martin? The answer is "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree", and I didn't get it because I had forgotten the Sinatra recording. Bing recorded it in 1973 for the denouement of the BBC Radio 2 biography series, although initially it was a makeweight for its other side, "It's Not Where You Start, but Where You Finish", a theme that fitted more with what the BBC were looking for. Surprisingly, the single, with "Yellow Ribbon" plugged as the A-side, caught on here in the UK and briefly clambered into the lower echelons of the Top 50. What you hear when you listen to it - really listen to it - is that Bing still had all the tools of the trade - the "gold poured from a cup" quality to the voice and delicious phrasing (none of the other three singers come anywhere near) - whilst the arrangement is clever with a false ending built in. This was, I believe, one of the records that prompted Ken Barnes to conclude there was life in the old dog, and how right he was. But for all its merits, "Yellow Ribbon" still lacks a bit of polish. How many takes, I wonder? Sung live or to tracks? Both sides all done in an hour? Few, yes and yes, are the answers, I suspect.

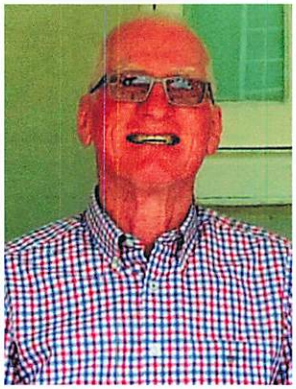
I then scaled the wall - the one that divides the pre and post Ken Barnes era - courtesy of Arne Fogel's *Bing Shift* radio programme. An alternate take of "At My Time of Life"? I had forgotten about that, and then a sideways shift to "Cabaret", from the same session, so I thought. What both of those recordings reveal is a much more professional Crosby than we had seen in the recording studio for many a year, one forced by the Barnes/Moore partnership to give time and attention to detail to his work. And it shows.

I will spare you the trawl through the daily videos, expect to say that "At My Time of Life" appears on both lists, the video coming from Bing's 1976 Montreal appearance with Bob Hope. It's delightful to see Bing, literally centre stage, and so much on top of the

BING CROSBY
Bing Goes Latin
BING
BING CROSBY
BING CROSBY
BING CROSBY

A Note from Australia

Graham Pascoe writes…



Anyone interested in the career of Bing Crosby would have to consider the many films in which he appeared over several decades. Our two editors did this towards the end of 2019 and thanks to page 39 of *BING* number 184 I was able to hear their discussion of Bing's film career in the fourth of their annual Bing Crosby Podcasts. Having just read David Lobosco's 'Celluloid Crosby' review of *Double or Nothing* I wondered whether Malcolm or Anton had included it in their 'top five' Crosby films. They hadn't. That didn't surprise me.

As David noted, critics in the USA enjoyed the film but were a little critical of Bing. As was usual in Australia at the time, *Double or Nothing* was screened first in Sydney. The Prince Edward Theatre's advertisement in the 'Amusements' column of *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 1 December 1937 promised a 'glittering show of shows. .. starring Bing Crosby, Mary Carlisle, Andy Devine, William Frawley and 100 of Hollywood's prettiest girls ...' Interesting omissions were the absence of references to Martha Raye and the Sing Band. It ran for two weeks and towards the end of January followed the established pattern of a second run at two central city cinemas for one week before going to the suburbs. The review in *The SMH* had advised its readers 'Bing Crosby's crooning remains as attractive or as irritating as ever, according to the point of view. But, as an actor, he seems to be growing steadily more stolid ... Whether he is being treated well by his sweet-heart or being betrayed by her, he looks sombre and jaded.' (The review is a reminder that many Australians were still unimpressed by crooners.)

Before *Double or Nothing* opened in Melbourne on Christmas Day 1937, the Sing Band was the subject of an article in *The Herald* (an evening paper) and some additional publicity later included a still depicting Bing and Mary Carlisle throwing dice in the film (was it really?) and also, before the film opened, Martha Raye was pictured with Bing and Mary. In the Capitol Theatre's advertising until opening day Bing had to play second fiddle to the Sing Band as the advertisements were headlined 'Hear the World's Newest sensation - The SING BAND'.

Bing sings "The Moon Got in My Eyes" with the Sing Band

Just before Christmas, the weekly radio newspaper *The Listener In* reported that Bing had cabled permission from Hollywood for *Double or Nothing* to be shown at a private preview at the Capitol on the following Sunday to aid funds for a Christmas toy appeal. From Christmas Day the film ran for two weeks and four days. It satisfied *The Herald's* reviewer who wrote that it was a 'good film' and 'BING CROSBY will be the hero of the programme for most of the audience'.

The previous Crosby film to be introduced to Australians was *Waikiki Wedding* in June. The two Decca records of songs from that film did not reach the shops until two months later. The two discs with songs from *Double or Nothing* were available for the first screening. The music magazine Tempo's reviewer considered them to be 'Four lovely sides ... Bing has never been in better form than on these discs ... perfect taste and fine diction'. Nevertheless, neither record sold two thousand copies although they remained in the catalogue until the late 1940s. For comparison, 'Sweet Leilani' with 'In a Little Hula Heaven' from *Waikiki Wedding* sold more than eight thousand to become the best-selling of Bing's 1937 releases.

'They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery' introduced Mike Kaptanis's look at Crosby imitators. One Melbourne singer received a special boost from Bing in 1946, and I'll come to that later, but it's coincidental that not long before Australians were introduced to *Double or Nothing* a Sydney radio station offered a silver cup donated by Bing to the contestant in its 'Amateur Hour' program who gave the best rendition of a Crosby song. Almost a decade later two singers began their professional careers on records, radio and later on television, inspired and influenced by Bing: Ross Higgins and Johnny O'Connor. Higgins told the writer of Bing's influence on his singing style and when O'Connor sang on the Tivoli circuit of vaudeville theatres he was billed as 'Australia's Bing Crosby'. In Melbourne, Danny Keating sang professionally at dance halls and on radio and was happy to be known as 'The Bing Crosby of Australia'. In 1946 he was trying to raise funds for a youth club he had established. He wrote to Bing for help and received some medals and autographed photos for club members and a sizable donation. Keating also obtained permission from Bing to sing a duet with him on a Melbourne radio station. Bing's recording of 'Where the Blue of the Night' was played in one studio while Keating sang the song with a guitar backing in another studio. Bing had sent a recorded message to be played: "Hullo Australia. This is Bing Crosby. I'm speaking to you from Hollywood ... I hope people listening to this broadcast will find it in their hearts to help in the [fund-raising] effort ... I send my very best regards to all of my friends in Australia.'

The last issue of *BING* reminds us that seventy-five years ago critics had noticed a deterioration in some of Bing's recordings. Some Australian critics were uncomplimentary also. Many of Bing's recordings from 1945 did not reach Australia until 1947 and the year didn't get off to a good start. 'Who's Sorry Now' with 'I've Found a New Baby' reached the shops in February to reviews such as: 'Not one of Bing's best by a long chalk' in *Tempo*, "Bing sounds tired' in Radio Times and his voice was strained according to Syncopation. The review of the 1944 recording of 'Night and Day' in *Music Maker* read that it was 'not quite up to standard. Bing just doesn't seem happy with this tune' although *Radio Times* reckoned it was sung with great feeling. 'Just One of Those Things' from 1945 was coupled with 'All By Myself' from 1946 and *Syncopation*'s critic wrote that 'This is not the voice of Bing Crosby of "White Christmas" form, but of an old man who just doesn't sing ... the voice is too weak'. *Music Maker* printed a contrary view that 'Just One of Those Things' was just right for Mr Crosby'. 'Siboney' and 'Good, Good, Good' were recorded at different sessions in 1945. The latter impressed *Radio Times* but of 'Siboney', 'somehow he misses'. *Syncopation*'s critic thought 'ardent Crosby fans will be disappointed'. Apparently *Billboard's* critic didn't think much of 'You Belong to My Heart' or 'Baia' but several Australian writers liked the Crosby-Cugat combination. So much for the critics. What did the public think? All of the above were hits for Bing in Australia in 1947.

John Bassett's challenge to identify the rarest of Bing's commercially issued records made me wonder what the rarest Australian issue might be. In 1985 The Victorian Bing Crosby Society's magazine *The Crosby Voice* suggested it was the 1928 recording of 'I'll Get By' with the Ipana Troubadours, pressed on Columbia a year later. Like the Ariel record of 'Susianna' illustrated in John's article, Bing's contribution on this Columbia disc was credited to a 'vocal chorus'. In a recent conversation with a fellow ICC member Rod Poynter we discussed this 'Australian rarest' challenge and thought it might be any of the 1931 records on which Bing is labelled with a pseudonym. In March 1931 Brunswick (Australia) announced 'the new Panachord 10" electrically recorded record' for sale at the low retail price of two shillings and six pence, compared with the usual price of four shillings. Discs with 'I Found a Million Dollar Baby' and 'I'm Through with Love' became available in October with the vocal attributed to Owen Cornell. Two months later an Embassy disc from Brunswick (Australia) with Bing's 'I Found a Million Dollar Baby' identified him as Arthur Beaumont. We don't know how well these records sold but suspect that the numbers must have been small, especially as the company went out of business soon afterwards.

Graham Pascoe *gpascoe34@bigpond.com*

Bing on the Box

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV Highlights - USA & Canada

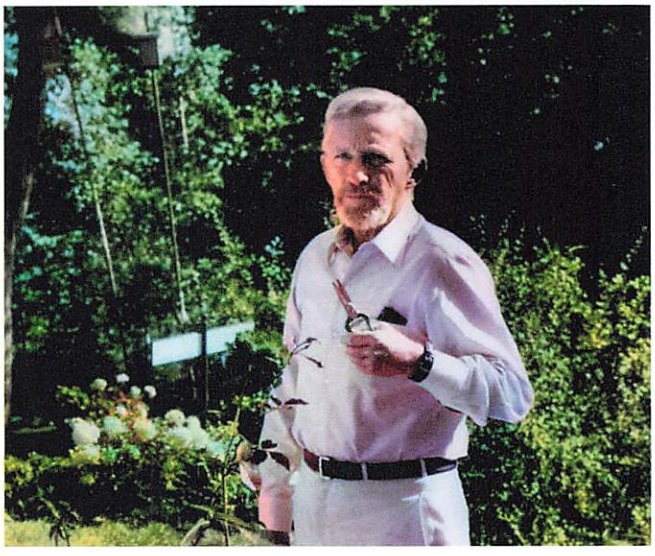
As far as I can see not much has been seen on TV since our last issue but there was:

Carol Burnett Show (Nov. 10, 1969)	MeTV
High Society	TCM

Some of you may be aware of Roku digital media players which offer access to streaming media content from various online services. Ron Cannatella tells me that there is a Bing Crosby channel available through the device and the films listed are:

- Paris Honeymoon (1939)
- The Star Maker (1939)
- Road to Rio (1947)
- Duffy's Tavern (1945)
- Mr. Music (1951)

Increasingly YouTube is providing more and more rare Crosby content and it's well worth searching for items you may wish to see. For instance, the full version of *Dr. Cook's Garden* can be viewed which is something many Crosby fans may not have seen. Bing's 1975 recording of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" is there too.



Doctor Cook in his garden

USA & Canadian Radio

Arne Fogel's long-running weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" continues on Sundays at 7 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at http://www.jazz88.fm/show/the-bing-shift/ and it's always enjoyable with an eclectic selection. Arne's near-encyclopedic knowledge and admiration of his subject is impressive and contagious (that's a word we have been hearing a lot lately!). His program really should not be missed and as an example, here's the playlist for the May 31 broadcast when he started out by looking at six examples of Bing's work in the 1970s.

> The Good Old Times – Time on My Hands – Send in the Clowns (Concord Pavilion version) – Gentle on My Mind – Carolina in the Morning – Yesterday, When I Was Young – Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (with Buddy Cole) – What a Little Moonlight Can Do – Good, Good, Good – Who's Sorry Now? – Dear Old Donegal – I Found a Million Dollar Baby (1940) – Ho-Hum – Got the Moon in My Pocket – Little One – Last Night on the Back Porch

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series *Nostalgia Radio Time* has continued its long run, albeit at different times on new stations. Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program. His Easter weekend special included the whole of Bing's Philco show from April 7, 1948 with Fred Astaire and Peggy Lee as guests.

On May 2, Greg delivered his usual annual Bing Birthday Bash and it was a superb show. The songs he featured were:

> You Lucky People, You – Come Share the Wine – Both Sides Now (TV) – With Every Breath I Take (radio) – But Beautiful (radio) – Road to Bali (film out-take) – I Can't Begin to Tell You (TV) – Medley with Bob Hope (TV, 1976) – There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About (TV) – Love's Been Good to Me (TV) – The Men in My Little Girl's Life (TV) – Children – Stardust (radio) – Constantly – Devil May Care – Sentimental Music – Thanks for the Memory

The following week Greg featured Crosby imitators, basing his show on the article by Mike Kaptanis in our previous issue. He played songs by Harlan Lattimore with Don Redman, Charlie Palloy, Lee Bennett with Jan Garber, Buddy Clark, Dick Todd, Al Bowlly, Michael Holliday, and Russ Columbo (who sang "Where the Blue of the Night").

Greg is now heard online each Sunday at 9 AM (ET) over New York's 920 WON: The Apple www.mixlr.com/920-won-the-apple/ and each Saturday at 10 AM (ET) streaming over YUSA red on the Yesterday USA Super Station at http://www.yesterdayusa.com/. Each Sunday the show from the previous week is uploaded in Podcast form at:

https://nostalgiaradiotime.podomatic.com/ where you'll find nearly a full year of the shows available on demand 24/7!

Crosby Internet Radio has continued to broadcast 24/7 with a wide variety of shows including some of Arne Fogel's excellent "Bing Shift" programs. I mention Crosby Internet Radio in every issue but I'm sure that there are members who have never listened to it. Use the link on the BING magazine news page: **http://bingmagazine.co.uk/bingmagazine/news.htm**

The shows change on a monthly basis with the 15-minute 1954-56 show typically running throughout the day with other programs such as the KMH, Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows being interleaved every hour or so. The Crosby-Clooney shows are used frequently too.

Star Spangled Radio Hour broadcasts, which are available on cruisin1430, have continued to include some great Crosby shows in its schedule. On April 11, they streamed three Kraft programs, namely those for April 6, 1944, May 17, 1944 and January 18, 1945. Subsequently, there were further treats on April 25 with two very good shows being broadcast - GI Journal #86 (March 9, 1945) and Command Performance #169 (April 5, 1945).

On May 2, the AFRS VE-Day special was included with Bing singing "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition!", "Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer" and then closing the show with "Battle Hymn of the Republic".

But we are still not finished! On June 20, Command Performance #182 (July 5, 1945) was broadcast with Bing singing "Sentimental Journey", a medley of "Don't Fence Me In", "Paper Doll" and "I'll Walk Alone" before finishing with "I'll Be Seeing You".

The shows remain on the site for some months so it's well worth checking to see if they are still there. Follow this link: **https://www.dennismspragg.com/star-spangled-radio-hour/**

TV Highlights - UK

Crosby items seen since our last issue was prepared included:

Andy Williams – My Favourite Duets	Sky Arts
Discovering Bing Crosby	Sky Arts
Road to Bali	Sony Classic Movies
Road to Morocco	Sony Classic Movies
Road to Rio	Sony Classic Movies
Road to Utopia	Sony Classic Movies
Road to Zanzibar	Sony Classic Movies
Son of Paleface	Sony Classic Movies
The Country Girl	Talking Pictures
The Greatest Show on Earth	Film4
The Princess and the Pirate	Sony Classic Movies

UK Radio

The National Presenters

We can no longer easily spot Bing songs played on the BBC as their website does not show an overall listing of songs recently played any more. It is still possible to look at all the individual shows' track listings but this is not really a practical option. However, I have been aware of the following being played on the BBC national networks (Radio2 unless stated) of over the last four months. A rather disappointing list.

Clare Teal: Isle of Capri (with Rosie) (Mar. 22) – A Kiss to Build a Dream On (Apr. 5) – Stay with the Happy People (May 3)

Elaine Paige on Sunday: True Love (Mar. 29)

Liza Tarbuck: Lydia the Tattooed Lady (Apr. 25) – It's Been a Long, Long Time (June 20)

Breakfast (Radio3) – Gone Fishin' (Mar. 31)

The Local Radio Presenters

A similar problem arises with the BBC local radio stations and I have only picked out the presenters who regularly play Crosby tracks. All of the programmes listed can be heard live on the Internet or later on the BBC i-player.

Howard Leader (BBC Radio Lincolnshire) has a programme of big band swing and balladeers which goes out each Sunday afternoon. He had his schedule changed to take account of Covid-19 and he was switched to a 4-hour show starting at 2pm on Sundays. Bing songs played included:

On Treasure Island (Mar. 1) – Baby, Won't You Please Come Home (Mar. 8) – Have You Met Miss Jones? (Mar. 15) – All You Want to Do Is Dance (Mar. 22) – Everything Is Beautiful (Mar. 29) – Don't Fence Me In (Apr. 5) – Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (1931) (Apr. 5) – Yodelin' Jive (Apr. 19) – What Am I Gonna Do about You? (Apr. 19) – Let's Sing Like a Dixieland Band (Apr. 26) – Pennies from Heaven (May 3) – At the Jazz Band Ball (May 10) – Blue Hawaii (with Connie Haines) (May 17) – Gentle on My Mind (May 24) – Lazy River (May 31) – My Blue Heaven (AFRS) (June 7) – Baia (June 14) – Way Down Yonder in New Orleans (June 21)

Gerald Jackson was using his two programmes on local radio - "Unforgettable" on Radio Lancashire on Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. and the other, the similarly named "Gerald Jackson: Unforgettable" on Radio Manchester on Sunday nights at 10pm to play our man frequently. However, at the outset of the Covid-19 crisis, Gerald switched to a 4-hour stint on Radio Lancashire starting at 6pm on Sundays and the Radio Manchester slot was dropped. Among the songs heard were:

Quicksilver (Mar. 1) – Autumn Leaves (Mar. 1) – Put It There, Pal (Mar. 8) – Memories (Mar. 8) – Dear Hearts and Gentle People (Mar. 22) – You Are My Sunshine (Mar. 22) – Pennies from Heaven (May 3) – Vict'ry Polka (May 10) – True Love (May 17) – (There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover (May 17) – Busy Doing Nothing (May 24) – Around the World (June 7) – Alexander's Ragtime Band (June 14) – Swinging on a Star (June 21)

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music:* (BBC Radio Wales, Sundays 9pm.) Songs played:

I Love You, Samantha (Feb. 23) – Zing a Little Zong (Mar. 8) – Too Marvellous for Words (Mar. 8) – Mountain Greenery (Mar. 15) – I'll See You in My Dreams (Mar. 22) – Swinging on a Star (Apr. 5) – The Best Things in Life Are Free (Apr. 19) – Road to Morocco (Apr. 19) – I'll Be Seeing You (Apr. 26) – True Love (May 3) – Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (May 3) – Gone Fishin' (May 24) – It's Been a Long, Long Time (May 31) – Busy Doing Nothing (June 14)

Bill Rennells' Harmony Night show with Al Ryan on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet on Sundays at 10 p.m. Bing songs heard:

Little Lady Make-Believe (Mar. 8) – True Love (May 3) – Meet the Sun Halfway (May 10) – When I Leave the World Behind (June 7)

Malcolm Macfarlane *macwilmslo@aol.com*

Once in a While

Personalities associated with Bing who have left us since our last issue was prepared, include:

Dame Vera Lynn, died at the age of 103 on June 18. She was Britain's wartime Forces' Sweetheart, and remained one of the country's most potent symbols of resilience and hope. With songs such as "We'll Meet Again" and "The White Cliffs of Dover", she inspired both troops abroad and civilians at home during World War Two. As Britain's cities came under attack, her wistful songs, with their messages of yearning and optimism, were heard in millions of British homes.

She was born Vera Margaret Welch on March 20 1917 in East Ham, London. Her dad was Bert Welch, a hard-up East End plumber and her Mum was Annie, a showbusiness-besotted, seamstress. By the age of seven Vera was singing on stage at the East Ham Working Men's Club and she continued to do club work for 8 years. Aged 11, she also joined a juvenile troupe called Madame Harris's Kracker Kabaret Kids. Vera had by now adopted the surname Lynn (from her maternal grandmother). The money she earned from her singing made a much-needed contribution to the family's finances. She left school at 14 and took a job in a button factory, but the urge to perform already possessed her, and with her parents' blessing she gave up her job and joined the Howard Baker Band for close on 2 years.

She had a week and a half with the Billy Cotton Band, but he let her go back to Howard Baker. Billy was worried about his musicians taking advantage of the young girl. Vera tried to get into radio with Henry Hall but he turned her down. She made her first record with Howard Baker and made recordings for Woolworths on their Crown and Rex labels. Her name was not given on the label to start with but eventually "Vocal refrain by Vera Lynn" was printed in small letters.

More importantly though she was taken on by Charlie Kunz to sing with him at the Casani Club in London. In 1937, she moved on to join Bert Ambrose's more famous band and her career progressed nicely and she became a successful recording artist. In 1939 she recorded a song that was to mean a lot to her in years to come - "We'll Meet Again". The song was closely associated with Vera throughout her life. She starred in a film called *We'll Meet Again* in 1942 which was based on her own life story. Vera re-recorded "We'll Meet Again" in 1954 and it was a hit again all over the world. It has been used in several films and was especially effective in *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), when with visual effects of nuclear explosions; it was used in the closing titles.

In late summer of 1939, Harry Lewis, a young "Eastender", joined the Ambrose Band as a clarinettist and tenor saxophonist. He began to go out with Vera, and in late 1939 they announced their engagement a few months before Harry and some of the other Ambrose band members joined the RAF and became the Squadronnaires. They married on August 11, 1941. With the outbreak of war and with half of the Ambrose band in the forces, Vera went solo and toured the Variety circuit.

She went into a long-running revue called *Apple Sauce* with Max Miller but had to leave the show for a while when she had her appendix removed, which was quite a big thing in these days. A poll of British forces had already selected her as their favourite singer and the newspapers gave her the title of the *Forces Sweetheart.*

In November 1941, the BBC started a new half hour radio show starring Vera called *Sincerely Yours* which responded to requests from the forces overseas and also sent messages back to them. She said "I always tried to choose cheerful songs that soldiers missing their wives and sweethearts could relate to. We weren't psychologists, but we understood that it was important to express the right meaning, and we put a lot of effort into getting the songs right." The show was immediately successful, often receiving up to 2,000 letters a week. The show's theme song, which became her biggest hit to date at the time, was "Yours", a Spanish number which had been given English lyrics.

In 1944, from March to June, Vera undertook a huge tour to entertain the troops. She gave concerts in Egypt, India and Burma in horrendous heat and looking back she considers that to be the most rewarding part of her career. Vera toured the UK too when she got back and she was so popular then that a comedian once cracked that the war had been started by her agent.

Apart from the film *We'll Meet Again* Vera made two more movies during the war, *Rhythm Serenade* (1943) and *One Exciting Night* (1944). In *Rhythm Serenade* she played a school teacher. After her school is closed, she tries to join up. However, she is persuaded to organise a nursery for a munitions factory. The other film *One Exciting Night* had her in a dramatic role about art thieves. This was also known as *You Can't Do Without Love.*

Her daughter and Vera's only child, Virginia Penelope Ann Lewis, was born on 10th March 1946. After the war, Vera concentrated on being a mother and wife. But her unfulfilled contract with Decca Records and financial pressures meant that she was lured back into showbiz in 1947. She restarted her radio show "Sincerely Yours" and her husband became her manager. Vera's record label, Decca, astutely promoted her records in the U.S. during the musicians' strike of 1948 and she had a U.S. Top Ten hit with "You Can't Be True, Dear."

In 1949, the BBC dropped her radio show because it claimed that there was no demand for her "sob stuff". They wanted her to sing in a more lively style. So she made shows for Radio Luxembourg and kept touring and recording. In 1952 Vera's British recording of a

German song, "Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart", became her best selling record ever. It was the first British record to top the American charts and be Number One on both sides of the Atlantic at the same time. In Britain it held the top spot for 10 weeks on the Sheet Music Charts (there were no record charts in the UK then). The success of that song led her to go the USA and appear on a number of shows at that time.

When Britain's first Record Chart did eventually appear in November of 1952, such was her popularity that Vera had three songs in the Top 10 with "Forget Me Not", "Homing Waltz" and "Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart". In 1954 she topped the UK Singles chart with "My Son, My Son" and the song also charted in the US.

Vera did a show for the new Independent Television Network in 1955 and then the BBC realised their mistake and called her back in 1956. She went on to have very successful long-running shows on radio and TV in the UK often working with orchestra leaders Cyril Stapleton and Eric Robinson.

Bing and Vera get to know each other

Vera continued to tour all over the world. Her TV show was very popular and attracted all manner of top guests and in 1975 it was Bing who dropped in on Vera. Bing's appearance on the Vera Lynn Show in 1975 came about because of the involvement of record producer and ICC stalwart Geoff Milne. Geoff had arranged to visit Vera Lynn at her home but as he was expecting a call from Bing, he left details of where he would be. As he arrived at Vera's home, her husband greeted Geoff with the news that "some nut" who said he was Bing Crosby wanted to talk to him. Geoff explained that it really was Bing, and he then spoke to him. At the end of the conversation, Geoff asked Bing if he would like to speak to Vera. Bing had a very pleasant conversation with her which resulted in Vera asking Bing if he would guest on her show – which he did. Vera introduced Bing saying:

> "Over the years, there have been many singing highlights in my career, but however great the memories of those times, nothing can equal the thrill that I now feel in introducing to you someone we all love and admire so much, ladies and gentlemen, Bing Crosby."

Bing came on to tremendous applause and Vera told him that she was fulfilling a life's ambition by singing with him. They sang "Sing" together and Bing then went on to sing "That's What Life Is All About". ICC member Trevor Wagstaff wrote to Vera and asked her about working with Bing and she replied:

> "...As far as my memories of Bing are concerned, I could not possibly go into all the days we spent together rehearsing, but the one thing that did stick in my mind was when we had tea, he had a huge piece of fruit cake and a large lump of ice-cream with it! Probably a good combination, but not one we were familiar with...
>
> (Vera Lynn, in a letter dated March 27, 2007 to Trevor Wagstaff.)

In 1975, Vera was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire. She gradually cut back on her entertainment activities in the 1980s but she still worked hard for many charities especially those concerned with servicemen and with cerebral palsy. She sang outside Buckingham Palace in 1995 in a special ceremony to mark the golden jubilee of VE Day and announced that it was the last time she would sing in public. A choice some other artists ought to have made as they got older.

Sadly her husband, Harry, died in 1998 and Vera then spent her time between her Sussex home and a place in the South of France. She did however keep busy with her charity work and in 2009 she held numerous book signings in conjunction with her latest autobiography which became a best seller. Much to her amazement, a compilation CD "We'll Meet Again – The Very Best of Vera Lynn" topped the British album charts in 2009.

Dame Vera became the oldest living artist to appear in the top 20 album charts. She beat off The Beatles, with their songs from 40 years ago. The success of this old material led the press to call the trend "From hip-hop to hip-op."

The Way We Were

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

On Saturday, June 5, 1920, Harry ('Bing') Crosby (aged 17) took part in the Grand Concert held in St. Aloysius Hall which was presented by the new Glee Club and Orchestra. Bing delivered an elocution selection called "As You Like It" with two others during the intermission. On the following Wednesday, Graduation Day ceremonies at Gonzaga High School began at 2:30 p.m. in the gymnasium and Bing was the first speaker with a graduation exercise called "The Purpose of Education." Bing duly graduated in the Classical Course. As part of the Fourth Year High School, Section A, he achieved distinctions in Christian Doctrine, English, Latin, History, and Civics.

During the summer break, he worked on an alfalfa farm at Cheney with his friend Paul Teters but after a week or two they left and stowed away on a train to Portland, Oregon, to try to see Bing's brother, Everett. They could not trace him so they stowed away on a train again, this time the "Shasta Limited" to Roseburg in south Oregon, where they were spotted and put into a cattle car returning to Portland. They did eventually find Everett in Portland working as a bootlegger but they subsequently spent a night in jail after failing to pay for a Chinese meal. Later in the summer, Bing's career as a topographer with the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company ended when he badly cut his knee with an axe. He returned to Spokane ready to enrol at Gonzaga University in September.

75 YEARS AGO

As May 1945 unfolded, Bing (aged 42 that month) continued with his weekly *Kraft Music Hall* broadcasts hosting guests such as The King Cole Trio, Cass Daley, Florence Alba and Eddie Heywood. After the May 17 show he went on a golf tour with Bob Hope only returning to KMH on June 28 to ostensibly sign off until the fall. However he had already decided to leave the Kraft show and the subsequent legal dispute continued for several months.

Apart from this, Bing guested on Frank Sinatra's radio show on CBS and sang a medley of parodies with Frank, he starred in the transcribed Lux Radio Theater version of *Sing You Sinners* and he continued to record radio shows for the AFRS. On VE Day, Bing appeared on *The Chapel of the Air* hour on the Mutual Network talking about finding time for prayer. This was the first of Father Patrick Peyton's Rosary broadcasts and it achieved nationwide coverage as it was a national day of thanksgiving following the end of hostilities in Europe. On the same day, Crosby and Hope starred in the Seventh War Loan program which was broadcast on all networks. On May 16, Bing took part in the Seventh War Loan Drive show at Warners' Wiltern Theater in Hollywood with Paulette Goddard, the Andrews Sisters, and Rise Stevens.

Bing and Bob are separated by Commander Jack Dempsey at the Chicago golf match.

The groaner's golf benefit tour with Hope began in Chicago on May 27 and moved on to Cleveland and South Bend, where they appeared in the Notre Dame stadium in a two-hour war bond show before 50,000 people.

> *Bing obliged with no less than four solos. His rendition of "Sentimental Journey" so captivated some of the younger members of the audience that he halted momentarily in the middle of a song to remind the squealing bobby socksters, "Please, I'm an old man."*
>
> (*South Bend Tribune*, May 29, 1945)

The tour continued to Indianapolis, Omaha, Topeka and finally Kansas City, where Bob Hope hosted a bond rally at the Municipal Auditorium before a crowd of 12,000. Bing participated singing four songs and joining in the comedy routines. A total of $2,667,237 worth of war bonds was sold. Bing then travelled on to St. Louis and then New York where at a lunch at the Hotel Pennsylvania he was awarded the medal as "Number One Screen Father for 1945" by the National Father's Day Committee for his work with the USO overseas, bond tours and fine screen performances in 1945.

Moving on to Montreal in Canada, he spent two days visiting hospitals and giving short concerts before benefit golf matches. He then went on to Boston for a gruelling day where he sang for 30 minutes at a Bond Rally and then at a benefit golf match before visiting a hospital where he sang for the wounded in the Red Cross Auditorium. He was in Washington DC on June 10 to receive a "GI Oscar" as "best actor" in open air ceremonies at the Walter Reed Hospital in recognition of his wartime entertainment of allied troops. Bing sang "Sentimental Journey" and a parody of "Don't Fence Me In" at the ninety-minute event which was emceed by Milton Berle and was attended by a crowd of 10,000.

After further hospital visits in Valley Forge and Philadelphia, Bing went by train to Salt Lake City where he met up with Bob Hope again for more golf benefits and hospital visits.

During the summer, two films in which Bing had an involvement were released. *The Great John L* had mixed reviews with The New York Times saying: "A curious mixture of excitement and tedious drama make up the picture *The Great John L*, which arrived at the Globe on

Saturday, a promising augury for the newly launched Bing Crosby Productions ... It is only after he loses to Corbett and his wife dies that "Honest John" marries his boyhood sweetheart and turns to the better life. But the process is overlong and occasionally boring."

Out of This World had a better reception

> *Imagine a shy young singer with Eddie Bracken's looks and the soothing voice of Bing Crosby and you have a picture of the hero of this film. . . . That trick of movie prestidigitation is the novel twist of the show and is good for a laugh whenever Eddie opens his mouth and Bing's warbling comes out. To be sure, Mr. Crosby never shows up, but his four fair-haired youngsters are on hand in one scene to represent the family and toss a few quips about dad. . . . Mr. Crosby sings three fairish songs amusingly.*
>
> (Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, June 7, 1945)

Back in Hollywood on June 20, Bing was soon hard at work making records with the Andrews Sisters and making major radio appearances on the Bell Telephone Hour and the Ray Bolger Show. Filming of *Blue Skies* began on July 12 and the same day Bing recorded "It's Been a Long, Long, Time" with Les Paul which quickly became a huge hit. He recorded shows for *Mail Call* and *GI Journal* and on August 7, he recorded "I Can't Begin to Tell You" which also topped the charts. A week later, on the Paramount lot, Bing heard the news of Japan's surrender and he was asked to paint a ceremonial cross over a picture of a Japanese soldier's helmet at the studio.

Gord Atkinson, later a noted Canadian broadcaster, was there as a young serviceman.

> *It seemed that everyone at Paramount headed for the studio square, site of a war bond billboard with large images of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. A big letter "X" had been painted over the first two caricatures. Suddenly voices began calling for Bing, which eventually broke into a chorus of "Crosby, Crosby, Crosby." A few moments later Bing appeared carrying a bucket of black paint and a brush. A ladder was put in place and Bing began climbing towards the billboard. . . . With two sweeps of his brush, Bing placed an "X" over the image of Tojo, and the crowd let out with a loud cheer—and took off in every direction to celebrate.*
>
> (Gord Atkinson, *Gord Atkinson's Showbill*, pages 20–21)

That evening, Bing went on to record a *Command Performance Victory Extra* radio show at the CBS Radio Playhouse at 1615 North Vine Street, Hollywood for broadcast on August 15, VJ Day. Bing was the MC and many stars took part. Transcriptions from earlier AFRS shows were also employed.

> *"...Crosby, who sang three songs in terrific voice, traded quips with Frank Sinatra and handled the introductions, providing a necessary note of average-Joe understatement in stark contrast to the mannered oratory of such actors as Edward G. Robinson, Loretta Young, and Robert Montgomery. The show begins as the announcer, Ken Carpenter, proclaims the Victory Extra to prerecorded shouts, applause, and the strains of "Over There." Crosby introduces himself: "What can you say at a time like this? You can't throw your skimmer in the air. That's for a run-of-the-mill holiday. I guess all anybody can do is thank God it's over."*
>
> *...Given the radio revolution Crosby soon initiated, this gala, transcribed on "the first day of world peace" (in Carpenter's phrase), surely confirmed Bing's belief that prerecorded shows were the wave of the future."*
>
> (Gary Giddins, *Swinging on a Star*, pages 527-528)

50 YEARS AGO

Bing and his family spent most of May, 1970 at their home in Las Cruces, Mexico. On June 3, Bing and Kathryn flew from San Francisco via Panama to Buenos Aires, Argentina where they were surrounded by reporters on their early morning arrival and both gave brief interviews. After several days' partridge shooting at one of the King Ranch properties, they returned to Buenos Aires and taped an appearance on a Saturday morning TV show in Buenos Aires called "Sabados Circulares de Mancera".

> *We returned to Buenos Aires to stage a television show for the benefit of Maternidad Pardo, an obstetrical hospital which treated mothers who couldn't afford proper care.*
>
> *The program was presented live, with no rehearsal, and of course in Spanish.*
>
> *Given my specialization in charitable begging, I was chosen to narrate the history of the hospital, and to explain the need for donations. I also joined Bing in a series of duets, in which, as ever, he relied on me for most of the lyrics.*
>
> *After the first song, he explained, in his own inimitable Mexican Spanish, "Dispensen, por favor. Caterina es muy timida cuando canta."*
>
> *I appreciated the sentiment, but felt that the message was superfluous. There was no crying need to inform the audience that I was terrified. After all, this was television. They could see it for themselves.*
>
> *The show was a triumph, Bing was high as a kite, and I was collapsing in nervous exhaustion. I am told that we attended a formal dinner, and went night-clubbing thereafter, but my first recollection is of awakening on the plane, four hours into the long flight back to San Francisco.*
>
> (Kathryn Crosby, *My Last Years with Bing*, page 235)

Bing and Kathryn plus their children spent time at their Rising River ranch in Northern California during July and on July 16, Bing took Nathaniel to Pittsburgh for the dedication of Three Rivers Stadium. It was said to be the first time he had attended a game in Pittsburgh for thirteen years. Bing participated in the pre-game ceremonies before seeing the Pirates lose 3-2 to the Cincinnati Reds in front of a crowd of almost 50,000. On July 26, Bing and his son Harry left for Nairobi in Kenya for an African Safari vacation with friends. They came back via Rome, Copenhagen and London. At the end of August, Bing flew to Vermont to commence filming *Dr. Cook's Garden*.

KEEPING TRACK

RICHARD BAKER BRINGS US UP-TO-DATE

Richard Baker provides his usual update.

We are experiencing very strange times. I cannot say that the dearth of new CDs or DVDs is a consequence of the Covid-19 shut downs, but if not it is something of a coincidence because there has been a near total cessation of activity on the new issue front. Here's hoping that all (and I mean everything) might return to normal as soon as possible. In the meantime I'll attempt to pick up on items that have caught my attention in the hope that some readers might be interested.

Compact Discs

A return to "Philco Radio Time" which I covered last time. Whilst all tracks are listed on the tray insert of the issue, I fear that something happened between proof-reading and the final print of page 10 of the booklet, so that the full details of tracks 30 – 32 vanished. The missing information relating to songwriters and original transmission dates is:

30 – I Got Lucky in the Rain (Jimmy McHugh / Harold Adamson) (June 1, 1949) –with Loulie Jean Norman.

31 – Medley: Far Away Places / So Tired / Powder Your Face with Sunshine (Alex Kramer, Joan Whitney / Jack Stuart, Russ Morgan / Carmen Lombardo, Stanley Rochinski) (June 1, 1949) – Buddy Cole (piano).

32 – Some Enchanted Evening (Richard Rodgers / Oscar Hammerstein II) / Farewell message (June 1, 1949).

The tracks on the set derive from the discs that were sent out to radio stations for broadcast. These included a highly detailed "Instruction and Cue Sheet", giving timings for such items as inserts of local station ID and commercials.

PRODUCED BY BING CROSBY ENTERPRISES, INC.
Philco Radio Time
STARRING
BING CROSBY
NOT TO BE PLAYED BEFORE October 18, 1946 OR AFTER October 18, 1946
PROGRAM 1
PART 1 OF 1
START OUTSIDE
33 1/3 RPM
USE STYLUS PRESSURE
Not in excess of 2 oz.
ORTHACOUSTIC HD6-MM-8138
IMPORTANT
This record is furnished to the station to which sent with the full understanding and agreement that it will be played for one broadcast ONLY and will be returned prepaid, within 7 days after program date. It is also agreed that all program material on this record is the exclusive property of the producer. Pack carefully in original carton.
Send to Philco Advertising Stores,
Third and Westmoreland Sts.,
Philadelphia, Penn.
RECORDED BY AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

A full quote from one of these cue sheets is given on the "BING" magazine website under the listing for the Philco show #18 of 12th February 1947. The discs were single sided, vinyl, and played for 15 minutes each, so two were needed for each show (though I have seen an illustration of a label which suggests that three might have been used on occasion). This called for some adept disc jockeying at the change over point. An illustration of a typical label appears on page 6 of the CD booklet. Given the distribution method, and given the broadcasters' opposition to pre-recordings, I wonder how programmes had previously been transmitted to remoter parts? At one time I assumed that landlines were used for relays, or possibly broadcasts could have been picked up and instantaneously re-broadcast. But if so, why not stick with that approach for the pre-recorded shows rather than duplicate large numbers of discs, dispatch them, and expect to get them all returned? If anyone can shed any light on this I would be very grateful to hear from them. Much has been written about Bing's part in recording for radio, but I have never seen this angle covered.

Record Prices

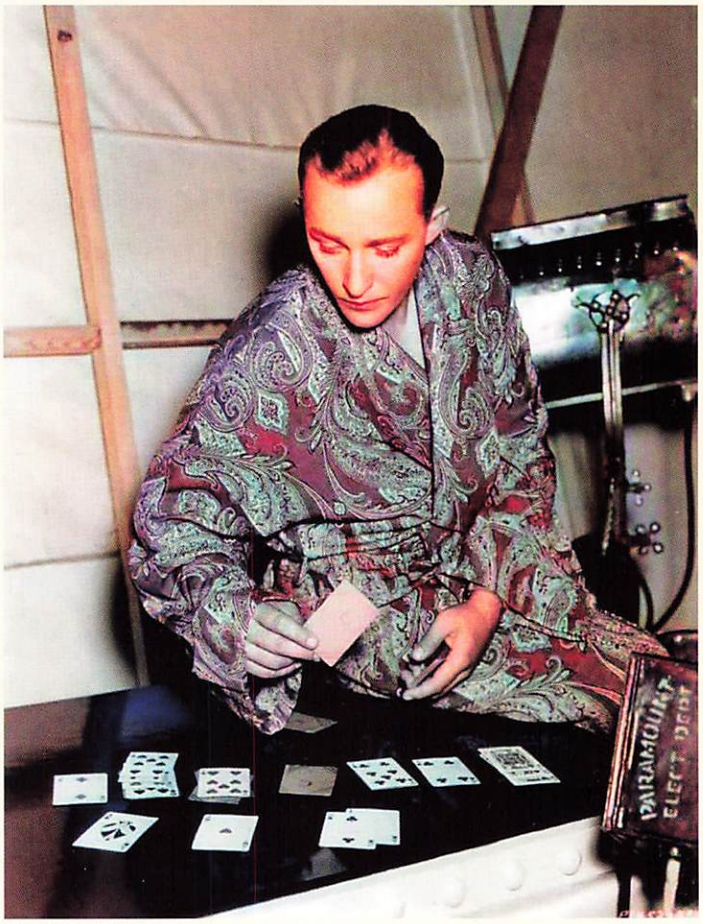
In BING #184 I mentioned a 4-CD bundle "Seven Classic Albums" and a Rosemary Clooney issue of 22 albums on 10 CDs, which have stirred some thoughts on record prices. For as long as I have collected records – well over 60 years! - I have read or been told that music has never been cheaper, and it can certainly be shown that on a strict cost per minute basis, after adjusting for inflation, records (and now other sources of music) have become progressively cheaper over many years, with especially noticeable changes with each introduction of a new format.

Over the last few years there has been a proliferation of large box sets of CDs at rock bottom prices. Box sets representing major parts (or even all) of an artist's output, often with detailed information carefully put together, are not new, but these have been in the premium price bracket. Now we can find such large bundles marketed in boxes with as many as ten CDs at the price of a single "premium" CD. The disadvantage is that such sets never give meaningful information. Quality can be variable but is not always bad. This is a possible result of the drop in sales of CDs generally, resulting I imagine in a large surplus capacity of manufacturing plant. The Crosby and Clooney sets are just the tip of a very large iceberg. Almost any artist of the last 70 or 80 years whose name remains recognisable and whose works are not carefully protected by relevant rights has been targeted. This simple fact, combined with multiple Internet music sources, has resulted in music becoming cheaper by far than it has ever been. When I first bought records the price of a "single" with two songs, running for a total of possibly 6 minutes, was around 6 to 7 shillings (30-35 pence). The current equivalent would be over £8. (I won't try to convert to other currencies, because inflation rates have differed, but the principle will be similar). £8 now will buy a quality mid price CD with 20 or more tracks and possibly 70 odd minutes of music, or be more than enough to acquire the four CD "Seven Classic Albums" mentioned above. Looking back over the same timespan, a standard price 12 inch LP with 12 tracks and probably well under 40 minutes - would cost just under £2, equal to £52 today. For many that was a luxury item, and today only collectors seeking semi-rarities would pay such amounts for a single disc. Looking back I can't quite understand why I was buying records, let alone how I managed it!

And now of course we have streaming services, which if you can bear the commercial interruptions are free, with the ability to select from fairly comprehensive collections of music.

Buyers turning a deaf ear to vinyl!

The British Phonographic Industry (BPI), the representative body in the UK for the industry generally, publishes a yearbook. The latest "All About Music 2020" carries some information about research into the resurgence in vinyl sales. 4.3 million discs were sold in the UK in 2019, up 4% on 2018, making it the twelfth consecutive year of growth. A high proportion of the sales were of reissues of material from the 60s and 70s, also continuing earlier trends, and vinyl sales are at their highest since the early 1990s, now accounting for one in eight of all physical record sales. The "average" vinyl consumer spent £90 in the year, up 10% on 2018. One conclusion reached is that many purchasers are relatively mature and are completing collections of favoured artists or "refreshing" those collections. Anecdotal evidence that I have seen suggests that similar trends exist in North America, though I could not find any published figures. I find one part of the report astonishing. It seems that a fifth of those who are buying vinyl discs do not take them out of their sealed wrapping. Not only that, but they have no means of playing them! The BPI concludes that this particular cohort are buying for the artwork and for display.



In seeming confirmation that vinyl sales have continued this upward trend, Britain's "New Musical Express" for 22 June reports that the Official Charts Company has recorded sales over the previous week reaching the highs of pre-COVID-19 with vinyl sales surging by 27.57% week-on-week to a total of 88,486 units, while CDs also experienced a rise of 11.09% to 253,779 units. Overall, physical sales accounted for 19.1% of the overall albums market across the past week, a three-month high.

I hope that all readers stay well and do everything needed to protect themselves and families.

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